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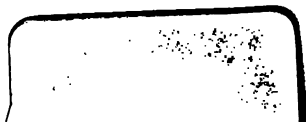
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WADSWORTH BOYS



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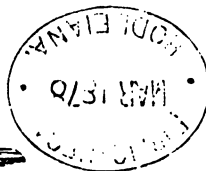
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THE
WADSWORTH BOYS;
OR,
AGNES' DECISION.

BY
D. S. ERICKSON.



GLASGOW:
JOHN S. MARR & SONS, 194 BUCHANAN STREET.
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THE WADSWORTH BOYS.

CHAPTER I.

LEAVING SCHOOL.

“Not caring how the metal of your mind
Is eaten with the rust of idleness.”

BEN JONSON.

It was the anniversary of the Dartfield Young Ladies' Seminary. The spectators' seats in the school hall were crowded by friends of the pupils. The graduating class, twenty in number, dressed in white, with blue neckties, shoulder knots, and hair ribbons, marched in to the music of the Orpheus Band.

The exercises passed off smoothly, and the time for conferring the diplomas came. They lay upon the principal's table, twenty rolls of parchment tied at each end with blue tape ribbon, and arranged in the order in which they were to be delivered, each young lady's name on a slip of paper tucked into the roll. Mr. Thetford was too systematic a man to have the slightest confusion at such a time. The Reverend

Doctor Anstace, President of the Board of Trustees, stepped forward to give the rolls to their owners, and, as the young ladies filed out before him, had a pleasant word for each.

There were twelve diplomas marked "Bona," seven marked "Melior," and one "Optima." The slip attached to the latter bore the name "Agnes Wadsworth." Agnes was the last of the class to come forward. The band, obedient to a signal from Mr. Thetford, struck up "See the conquering hero comes." As Doctor Anstace handed her the diploma, he said—"It is with the greatest pleasure that I, your friend and pastor, in behalf of the teachers and trustees, confer upon you the highest honours of this institution, for I know that the advantages you have here enjoyed will be improved in after life, making you, as I believe, happier and more useful in all its relations." Agnes' cheeks flushed, her eyes sparkled, and the dull planks seemed to dance beneath her tread as she returned to her place.

The exhilarating music ceased, and men of intellect, leaders in the world of mind, inculcated in well chosen words the lesson that education is a means, not an end, and appealed to the young ladies, who were to go out from those halls of learning that day, to sustain the good fame of their *Alma Mater*, and not to allow the powers there cultivated to be eaten out by the rust of neglect and frivolity.

The audience were requested to keep their seats until the graduating class had left the hall; and the band playing "Home, sweet Home," the young ladies again formed in line, and passed out into their dressing-room.

"Is not that last strain a little more appropriate to young ladies than the one that went before?" whispered Professor Buffum to Doctor Anstace.

"Don't pick flaws, my dear sir, don't pick flaws," was the reply. "Thetford is a great fellow for effect; to be sure, overdoes occasionally perhaps; but if you can find a man who will compare with him for arousing the enthusiasm of his scholars, and making a pleasure where other teachers make a task, I would like to see him."

The dressing-room door was closed,—all restraint was thrown aside. Agnes' more intimate associates clustered about her, and were boisterous in their congratulations. "I knew you'd get the Optima. I always knew you'd get it!" cried one who held a roll marked "Bona."

"Of course she would, she's worked hard enough for it," cried another.

"Seeing I could not have it, I'm glad you've got it, Aggie," said Bessie Banister, who had been Agnes' closest competitor. "I say, girls, let's give our Optima three cheers!" shouted Bessie, whose propensity for repeating the sayings and doings of

her idolised "big brothers," had often called out the remonstrances of her teachers.

"Come, come, Miss Banister, will you never learn to be lady-like?" interrupted Miss Carlisle, the junior assistant, who entered the room just at that moment.

"Well, girls, if we can't cheer our Optima, we'll receipt her."

"Receipt!" said Miss Carlisle; "in what vocabulary did you find that word?"

"Oh, it's vacation; please don't talk vocabulary now—there's a dear. Fall back, if you please, ladies and gentlemen," using her diploma as a baton; "don't crowd upon our distinguished fellow"——

"Fellow-citizen," suggested Mattie Ormond laughing.

"Fellow-student, may it please you," corrected Bessie with a low bow. "Now, ladies and gentlemen, form a line, pass in at this door and out at this, and we shall avoid all pressure," and she marked the imaginary threshold with her foot. "Seeing I wanted the Optima awfully, and seeing I didn't get it, I might as well be the one to introduce the admiring and appreciating crowd. Miss Mattie Ormond, Miss Optima."

Each member of the class was presented to Miss "Optima" by name. In several cases to the name was added some witty allusion to school incidents that convulsed the listeners with merriment.

When the burlesque ceremony was over, Miss Carlisle interposed, "You must let her go now, Bessie. Agnes, I came to tell you that your father is waiting in the carriage. I will not bid you goodbye; come and see me this afternoon; you remember I start for home early to-morrow morning."

"Yes, I will come," answered Agnes. "I am sure I thank you all very much, girls. If I had been in your place, and you in mine, Bessie, I should not have been half as generous as you have."

"Oh yes, you would, three quarters and more too. I'm awfully mad inside. Kiss a fellow, can't you?"

Agnes heartily returned the proffered embrace of her former rival, and hastened downstairs to join her father.

"This is a proud day for me, my daughter," said Mr. Wadsworth as he handed her into the carriage. Mrs. Wadsworth added her congratulations, and they rode home discussing the details of the exhibition.

Naturally enthusiastic, and gifted with a brilliant intellect, Agnes needed no urging to keep in the front ranks of her school-fellows; indeed, her school employments had been so congenial that she almost felt that she had grasped with ease and carried off a prize that rightfully belonged to one of those of heavier mould, who had reached and struggled for it. The stirring events of the day in which she had taken so prominent a part had roused her highest aspirations; she

determined that she would not be one of the crowd of idlers, one of the countless throng of nobodies; she would run well the race in which she had started so auspiciously.

When she went in the afternoon to take leave of Miss Carlisle, the teacher was busily employed transferring the contents of her bureau drawers and closets to two large trunks that stood open on the floor. To the question, "Cannot I help you?" Agnes received the answer, "No, thank you; I always choose to pack my trunks myself;" and she stood a few moments watching as one garment after another was deftly folded and smoothly placed in the receptacle.

"There is not much of the literary woman about you, if a literary woman is an untidy one," remarked Agnes.

"No, I don't think there is; but the idea is getting out of date, is it not? that a woman is, of course, a slattern, if her researches have extended beyond *Peter Farley*, a child's arithmetic, and a sensational novel. How did you like the addresses this morning?"

"Very much indeed; they were all in the same vein though."

"Yes, but there is need enough of the advice given. I think of one after another of my schoolmates, the young ladies who graduated when I did, and while I was a pupil in our seminary; some are married and occupied with home duties, some like

myself are teachers, but the majority are leading a life of busy idleness; nothing but bows and flounces, ribbons and feathers, silks and laces, in quantity and quality to the extent of each one's means—beyond the means of some, I am afraid. Just those fripperies, nothing more. I often wish I could repeat in tones loud enough to be heard by every trifier of my own sex the words of the prophet Isaiah, 'Rise up, ye women that are at ease; hear my voice, ye careless daughters; give ear unto my speech,' and so on; and I should like to repeat too the remarks of one of our commentators on the passage,—The alarm is sounded to the women at ease and the careless daughters, to feed whose pride, vanity, and luxury, their husbands and fathers were tempted to cheat one another and starve the poor. Let them hear what the prophet has to say to them in God's name, 'Rise up and hear with reverence and attention.'"

"You are rather severe on our fashionable ladies. I must say I do like to see a richly, becomingly dressed lady."

"So do I, if I know that she has not starved her heart and mind to adorn her body. I was at Madame Modiste's one day last week, and saw Jennie Butler there with some of her friends. "How does your botany progress?" I asked. She was one of the best botanists in our class, and in school-days had a good deal to say about the flowers she meant to collect and

analyse. 'My botany!' she answered with a giggle, 'it has progressed quite well, as high as the attic book-case with the rest of the old school-books. I don't see how it could progress much higher.' I passed on to another counter, and while I was looking at some goods I heard Jennie say—I believe she meant I should hear—'Now only think, girls, if we could get to be schoolma'ams we could cultivate our minds.'

"'I'm sure you're cultivating your head now; isn't that the same thing?'" said one of her friends. 'And raised lots of flowers on it,' said another, taking up the Dutch flower garden Jennie had laid down to try on one of Madame's most elaborate—most frantic, I had almost said—concoctions. When I left the store they were all talking at once about the shade of some French rosebuds; one thought that pink was best suited to Jennie's complexion; another crimson, and Madame was doing her full portion of the jabbering—for it was little better than jabbering—and I went out into the street thankful that a stern necessity, or perhaps I should say a kind Providence, had compelled me to think of things a little more profound than the shade of an artificial flower."

"You would take the rosebud, red, white, blue, or green, that happens to lie upon the top of the box, or one of those of which Madame had the largest stock that she wanted you to subtract from, wouldn't you?" said Agnes laughing.

"No, you know I would do nothing of the kind. Perhaps I have too much contempt for that style of young lady. I have talked with some of my classmates, and have asked them why they dropped all their studies when they left school, why they did not continue, at least, one or two in which they had been most proficient. They had all told me that they had intended to do so, and some that they had actually commenced a course of study at home, but that they missed the stimulus of school and class-room, and that whatever hours of the day they set apart they were almost sure to be broken in upon by family or social demands, many of them trivial, but quite sufficient to cause serious interruption, so that finally the young ladies gave up discouraged."

"Well, I mean to study at home, and I think I can do it; of course, now I have left school, I shall not want to be the only useless woman in the house. But mother attends to the boys; Bridget helps her all she needs. Sister Emmeline keeps the house, sees to the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick-maker, and is in her element tutoring the girls; so that really I don't see that I shall have much else to do but study."

"How would you like to begin a course of study with me?"

"I should like nothing better."

"I think we could be mutually helpful. I wish to

study,—I will be honest with you,—because I really take pleasure in acquiring knowledge, and because I do not mean to be all my life junior assistant ; and I believe that your companionship will be a great help to me, and I imagine that the thought that you must keep up with me will be just the slight incentive you may need to overcome the little home obstacles.”

“What studies do you propose to take up?”

“Latin first, I think, don’t you?”

“Oh yes, to be sure. I always admired Latin. Geology?”

“Yes ; and we can go to see Professor Buffum’s cabinet. He has often asked me to use it freely ; there is nothing like actually seeing the things you are reading or studying about.”

“Yes, and in the summer we might collect specimens, and have quite a respectable cabinet of our own. What do you say to French?”

“I don’t think we shall need to study that ; but we want to read enough to prevent our forgetting what we have learned of the language.”

“Yes ; and then there is history, chemistry, and mental philosophy. What quantities of things there are to learn !”

“We must not undertake too much at once ; if we do we shall become discouraged. It is only three years since I was promoted from a pupil’s to a teacher’s desk. I tried to take up every study just where I

had dropped it, and I wonder now that I should ever have thought that I could be faithful in my duties as a teacher and do the full work of a pupil too. I tried the plan for six months, and failed, of course. I could not, or did not, wake up any interest in my classes, and I was utterly disheartened. You remember the time, Agnes?"

Agnes smiled.

"I came home one afternoon disgusted with my books, the school, but most of all with myself. Instead of reading Dugald Stewart as I had intended, I, simpleton that I was, put my dejection on paper, put the sheet in an envelope, directed it to brother Sidney, and laid it on the hall table. I slept unusually late the next morning, and was waked by the banging of the hall door behind the messenger who mailed the letters. A good night's sleep had made me more hopeful. I would gladly have recalled my letter. Sidney would surely think me 'one of the silly women.' He is two years older than I am, and my only brother. A few days after the answer came. He did not laugh at me, as I feared he would, but, in reply to my childish wail, wrote, 'You should have listened to our principal when he harangued our seniors last week. 'Young gentlemen,' said he, 'don't try to learn everything; you can't do it. Don't spread your powers so thinly over the surface of learning, that they will not have weight enough to

penetrate beneath the surface !' I saw the foundation of my trouble at once ; selected, with Sidney's advice and with a view to my classes' needs, three studies, and soon found that what I lost in extent I more than gained in power. Sidney writes to me very fully about his studies. He is in college, and will be home for the summer vacation. His letters will be a great help to us. I shall tell him of our plans, and he will readily promise to keep us informed of all that is new and interesting in the lectures he attends."

"I shall like it so much. I almost wish the vacation was over, and we were ready to begin now."

During the vacation Agnes received and answered several letters from Miss Carlisle, in which their plans took definite form. They were to commence with four studies ; each was to devote to her books such hours at home as best suited her own convenience, and on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons they were to meet to talk of their studies, state difficulties, and read a few pages of some standard French author. Mere child's play, Agnes thought ; only four studies, and one of them simply holding vantage ground already gained. What were they to the Seminary course, in which she had been fully able to keep step ; mere child's play surely. She would be careful to be well prepared for the semi-weekly conferences, but should have, no doubt, ample time to make indepen-

dent excursions into the boundless fields of knowledge, opening more and more by the discoveries of zealous, hardy explorers.

Days were just as many hours long as they were when she was one of Mr. Thetford's scholars. Yes, so they were; but there was one important item that Agnes had left out of her calculations, the different demands made upon a school-girl's hours, and upon those of a young lady who is supposed to have finished her education.

CHAPTER II.

HOME.

THE first Wednesday in September came, and promptly at the appointed time Agnes knocked at Miss Carlisle's door. The active, appreciative mind of the junior student made up for the disparity in years and attainments, and the young ladies spent two hours of hearty enjoyment over their books. "A very stupid way of enjoying one's self, do you say, fashion worshipping Miss Belle? Perhaps it was more stupid than Mrs. Routby's party last evening, and your chat with that 'charming man,' Mr. Brummel! How it sparkled and effervesced under the gaslight; but it is vapid and flat enough now that memory brings it up in broad sunlight. More stupid, but certainly not less amiable, than Miss Sar-

castic's comments and your witticisms on your hostess's dress, manners, and style of entertainment!"

In the morning Agnes gathered her books around her on the sitting-room table, as had been her custom when preparing for school recitations. Her brothers were there too, each with his pile of school-books. Her sister Emmeline was copying some recently-acquired culinary receipts into her neat receipt-book. Mrs. Wadsworth was industriously stitching on a dress for Brownie, and Mr. Wadsworth was absorbed in the probabilities of the next presidential election, as they were stated by his most esteemed editor.

Half an hour passed quietly, when Agnes, glancing up from her lexicon, saw Rufus leaning back in his chair, idly twirling his pencil. "Finished your sums, Ruffie?" she asked.

"No, they won't come right. I wish you'd show me a little."

"Show him a little!" exclaimed Melville. "It's of no kind of use, Aggie. I've shown him all about it, and he *will* make that stupid blunder about the factors."

"Let me try, Rufus," said Agnes. Rufus laid his slate before his sister and stood beside her chair.

Agnes read the figures and said, "Yes, there is your mistake, you have multiplied where you should have divided."

"I told you so," said Melville. "That's his way of doing the sum."

"Don't the teacher explain the sums?" Mr. Wadsworth asked.

"No, sir," replied Rufus; "when I don't get them right he talks a little and says, 'now see if you can't work it yourself, my boy.'"

"And sometimes you work quite away from the right result," said his father.

"Well, he ought to know himself by this time," said Melville. "When I was ten years old I was ever so much beyond where he is now."

"That may be true, my son; but if Rufus lacks application does not Melville lack patience?"

Agnes spent fifteen minutes in trying to make clear to Rufus what seemed perfectly simple to her, then her father interfered. "Put your books away, my son. Perhaps you will see it better in the morning, you are tired now."

"You make nice figures, Ruffie," said Agnes, "if your sums don't always come right."

"Good at figures, if he is not good at figuring," said some one in the hall.

"Ah! old punster, come in!" said Mr. Wadsworth, and Professor Buffum entered.

"Books! books! books! I have been buried in books all day, and came here to be rid of them. Put them up, boys."

The boys briskly cleared the table and gathered about the visitor, who was never at a loss for a joke,

an anecdote, or an amusing illustration for his young friends. An hour was spent in social chat, and the clock struck nine. Professor Buffum shook off his young auditors with, "It's your bedtime, boys. Not another story for you to-night." The young people well knew that when their entertaining friend said "No more stories," they might as quickly draw tears from a block of marble as fun from his lips, and they trudged off to their slumbers, laughing as they went.

"Mrs. Buffum sent me with a message," said the professor, turning to Agnes. "I go into the city to-morrow to attend the monthly meeting of the"—

"Mousers and Sifters," interrupted Mr. Wadsworth.

"No, sir! the Antiquarian Historical Society."

"All the same," said Mr. Wadsworth.

"Not at all the same," retorted Professor Buffum. "However, that is irrelevant. Mrs. Buffum is going with me to see the 'Destruction of Jerusalem,' and so forth, and wished me to say that she should be most happy to have Agnes join us; there is every probability of a pleasant day, and I am told the painting is well worth seeing."

Agnes hesitated.

"There is nothing to prevent your going," said her father, who supposed she waited for his consent. "You will enjoy the drive; I should like to have you see the picture, and I dare say you will find 'and so

forth' enough to do when you are among the dry goods stores."

"If you are going to town, Aggie," said Mrs. Wadsworth, "you can get me that linen cambric I want so much."

"There are some errands I would like to have done, if you have time," said Emmeline.

"Plenty of commissions, I'll warrant," said her father. "Please tell Mrs. Buffum, sir, that we are very much obliged to her. Agnes will be delighted to go. What time do you start?"

"Half-past eight."

"You'll be ready, Aggie. You know the professor is one of the most punctual of men."

When the caller had taken his leave, Agnes began to sort out her books from the collection her brothers had hastily thrust into the bookcase.

"Are you going to carry all these books upstairs to-night?" her father asked. "I will help you; they are heavy; but you do not mean to use them to-night? Come, let us make a bargain. You will not study in your room after ten o'clock, and really you must not, and I will not say anything against your studying down here evenings. Is it a bargain?"

"Of course it is, if you say so, father."

The lexicons, grammars, &c., were carried up to Agnes' room, and with a good-night kiss her father left her.

The next morning her mother gave her a slip of paper, saying, "I have thought of several things I need, and I have put them all down here, and the places where you can get them."

"Here is my memorandum," said Emmeline; "perhaps you will not have time to get them all. Don't trouble Mrs. Buffum about them. I have put at the top of the list the things I want most."

"Dear, self-sacrificing sister," thought Agnes, as she looked over the list. The articles for the family headed the column, those for the writer's personal use had been placed at the foot.

"Aggie going to town?" cried Melville. "Father, mayn't she get me the history the teacher wanted me to have?"

"Can't you get it here?"

"No, sir; I've tried. They are all out at the store, and won't have any more till next week."

"And, father, mayn't she get me a new knife; I broke mine yesterday," begged Rufus.

"And me the new Rollo book. That one that talks about Jonas and the windmill," put in Stanley.

"Somesing for me!" petitioned Brown.

"Somesing for me!" said Mr. Wadsworth, tossing the little fellow in his arms.

"Well, Aggie, don't spoil your day trying to fill all these orders. You can go to town again next week, if you don't finish your business to-day. How are

your funds? Let me see your pocket-book. I will put some in this side for general consumption, and in here some for yourself. Buy what you need; Mrs. Buffum will advise you."

"Why, father, I don't know that I need anything. Don't I look well enough?"

"Oh, yes; but you must remember that a young lady who is getting old enough to go into society is expected to pay a little more attention to outward adorning than a school-girl. I want my daughter to dress well, as well as the daughters of other men of my standing, and I can afford to have them. When they dip too deeply into my pocket I will cry quarter. There is the carriage."

It was one of those bright days in September when all nature seems rejoicing, recent rains had freed the roads from dust, and the clear west winds filled man and beast with life and spirit. The twelve miles appeared hardly six. The exhibition was visited first, then Professor Buffum left the ladies to hunt, as he said, "for pins, buttons, and bobbins," having first made an appointment to meet them at the Antiquarian Society's rooms at five, or before.

"That's a stroke of policy, meeting at the Society's rooms," the elder lady explained; "my husband gets to talking with one of the antiquities, as I call them, about some old tub that crossed the ocean two or three hundred years ago, who came in it, and who did

not come in it; and they get as vexed with each other, and *dear sir-r-r* each other; and the professor don't know whether I'm five minutes or fifty behind time." "Don't you like to read about the first settlers?" asked Agnes.

"Oh! I have as much as I can do to look after some of the last settlers," she replied.

"No wonder Mrs. Buffum and Miss Carlisle never liked each other," Agnes thought.

It was dusk when she bade Mrs. Buffum goodbye at her father's door.

"Did you get my history?" demanded Melville.

"Is that my book?" said Stanley, seizing a flat parcel.

"Don't, Stanley! don't open it! That's not your book."

"Wait till after tea," interrupted their father. "Not a string is to be untied or a paper opened till after tea: then Aggie will tell you, one and all, what she has bought and what she has not."

"A pretty good day's work, I should think," said Mr. Wadsworth, after the purchases had been displayed and prices and differences explained. "I often wonder how you ladies manage to collect such numbers of small, large, and divers wares in one shopping expedition. I would rather undertake to build a ship than fill all the orders you had this morning."

"Mrs. Buffum and I looked over our lists as we rode along," said Agnes. "She wanted to go to several of the places I did, and we arranged 'the order of march,' as Professor Buffum called it, so we should not have to go back and forth."

"Systematised your shopping. Well, system is better than hard work, even if it is only in buying small wares."

"Aggie," said Mrs. Wadsworth, "Mrs. Peterson has been here to invite Brown to a children's party at her house Saturday afternoon; she expects to have ten or fifteen little folks about his age there. They are to go at three and come home at six. I expected the invitation for him, and told her that you would like to go with him."

"Why, mother?"

"I thought you would like to go. I am sure I should not have told her so if I had not."

"So I should any other afternoon; but, mother, that is just the time I go to Miss Carlisle's."

"So it is. I forgot that entirely. I can send Mrs. Peterson a note saying you cannot be there."

"Can Brownie go without me?"

"Mrs. Peterson did not invite me. She said she should be delighted to have you there, you like children so much, and always know what plays will please them."

"Does Brownie know about it?"

"Oh, yes! he heard all Mrs. Peterson said to me, and she told him about the party. She asked him if he wouldn't like to come to her house to play with little boys and girls, and I promised him he should go."

"It would be too bad to disappoint the little fellow. I will go," said Agnes.

"I would take your place, Aggie," said Emmeline, "but it is my director's day at the vestry, and I promised positively to be there."

"Never mind, mother," said Agnes, seeing Mrs. Wadsworth's expression of sincere regret, "Miss Carlisle can manage to do without me for once."

When Agnes went upstairs that evening, she stopped in Emmeline's room. "Tired, Aggie? Shall I come and help you put away your purchases?" said the elder sister.

"No, thank you. I only wanted to ask you if you noticed what father said to me last night."

"Yes, I heard what he said. Why do you ask?"

"Because I wanted to know what you thought he meant."

"That he would not like to have you sit up studying; that is reasonable, isn't it?"

"No, that's not what I mean. He said he would not say anything against my studying downstairs evenings. He does not object to my studying, does he? I don't see why he should."

"Now you speak of it, Aggie, I will tell you just what I think. Father does not object to your studying in moderation, or to your bringing two or three books down into the sitting-room evenings, but I don't think he likes to see such a quantity as you had last night. I noticed he looked at the pile several times."

"There were no more than I used to have when I was going to school."

"I know it, but don't you see, Aggie dear, it is different now. You were a school-girl then, and father and all of us wanted you to stand well in your classes, and get all the advantages from your school-course you could. We were all better pleased when you took the Optima than we should have been if some great good fortune had befallen us. But most people look on a school education as intended to fit one to take her place in the world and in the family. The evening is the only time we are all together as a family. Suppose mother or I were to bring down a great pile of books, and books, too, that require close attention, would you not think that we practically said, 'Here is my employment, mine individually, I am not interested in your conversation, or what you are doing,'"

"I am sure I did not mean so."

"No, I know you did not, and I have put the matter in a stronger light than father would, I dare say, even if he were to express exactly what he feels. Think it

over, Aggie, dear, and I believe you will see that I am right, and I know you will not consider giving up some of your own preferences a sacrifice, if you can add to father's happiness or comfort."

"No, surely. How could I when he is so kind and considerate for us?"

Agnes did think of what her sister had said; concluded that she had reasoned justly, and from that time took only her Geology into the sitting-room, evenings; kept some knitting or other plain work there, and joined in the conversation of the older members of the family, or the amusements of the younger. Still she anticipated many quiet hours in her own room with her books, when she would not be missed from the home circle.

On Friday morning she wrote a note to Miss Carlisle, stating the reason she could not meet her friend the next day, and adding that she should prepare her lessons as usual.

The ink was hardly dry on the address of the note when she heard Bessie Banister's voice on the stairway. "Up in her room? May I go up? Come on, Mattie?" and Josie and Mattie Ormond rushed in at the open door.

"Ah, old bookworm! poring over the musty old tomes, are you?"

"Don't you study at home, Bessie?"

"Study at home! I guess I don't. It's come here,

and go there. I don't have any time, and besides, I don't want to. Come, Aggie, Mat and I have come to see what you bought in town yesterday. Mrs. Buffum said that you got some lovely collars and ribbons, and a new bonnet."

"Oh-h-h, that is lovely! isn't it, Bessie?" exclaimed Mattie, as Agnes took the new bonnet from the box.

"Perfectly lovely, and cost a penny too. And those collars! why, they are real lace and French work. I say, Ag, what did the parental say when he saw these?"

"Father? He liked them. He said I had displayed very good taste."

"Oh, yes, very good taste; but what did he say when he saw the bills?"

"The bills?"

"Yes, stupid! The b-i-l-l-s. Melville W. Wadsworth, Esquire, to Dasper Ligneric & Co. 1 lace collar for daughter, etc., etc., etc."

"Father didn't care to see the bills," said Agnes laughing.

"No; but won't he care when pay-day comes?"

"Pay-day! These are all paid for. Father wouldn't allow us to run up bills if we wanted to."

"You don't mean to say he gave you the money, cash in hand, to pay for these 'illigant ribbons' and things?"

"Of course he did. I should not have bought them if he hadn't."

Bessie and Mattie stayed an hour and a half, keeping up all the time a rattling conversation, of which the above is a fair specimen. When they were gone, Mrs. Wadsworth came in with offers of assistance and advice about Agnes' toilet for Mrs. Peterson's little folks' party. "And Agnes," said her mother, "I am going out this afternoon, so is Emmeline. I told old Mrs. Bumpus she might come to-day. Will you give her the bundle on my bureau, and the basket Emmeline will leave in the pantry?"

Poor Mrs. Bumpus was old, sick, lonely, and moreover a complainer. She could not realise that "her rheumatiz," her cough, and her poor eyes were not the most interesting of all subjects to every auditor. Nearly the whole of Agnes' afternoon wore away listening to the oft-repeated tales of ills and infirmities, and when at last she was released it was to wonder if she had been selfish and unsympathising. "It is well I cannot go to Miss Carlisle's to-morrow," thought she, "for if there had been a conspiracy against my studying I could not have been more effectually prevented."

Brown went to the party under the guidance of Agnes, came home and reported that he had had a "spendifous" time, and was eloquent in his description of the play that Agnes had proposed and directed.

Week followed week, the new year was pressing hard upon the footsteps of the old, and would soon crowd it out of sight, and stand in the place of the hoary forerunner. So all move down the stream of time—years, man, events, each in its turn to give place to younger, more vigorous rivals. “Let us work while it is yet day, for the night cometh when no man can work.”

Thoughts like these occupied Agnes' mind on the last Saturday in December. She looked back to the day of the school exhibition, recalled the pleasure with which she had received her friend's proposal of joint systematic study, and her own sanguine expectations of carrying out those plans, but what had been her actual experience. Some days she had been well prepared to meet Miss Carlisle, but on others her preparations had been far from satisfactory ; she had had space for only hasty glances at her text books. Frequent and various had been the home and social draughts on her time, and more than once she had sent a note of apology. She was not contented with this state of things, and though there had been no remonstrance uttered, Agnes knew that Miss Carlisle was not. Certainly the failure had proceeded from no lack of interest ; was it perseverance that was needed ? Had she weakly yielded to the fear of being unsocial and disobliging ? Conscious that the one talent had been given her, Agnes asked herself

if she was not in danger of wrapping it in a napkin. She would ask Miss Carlisle what she thought.

Miss Carlisle held decided opinions, and did not hesitate to pronounce them.

"Yes," said she, "I see just how it is with you. You are in danger of running on the rocks that have wrecked many a woman intellectually. What a pity it is that women of mind do not put a higher estimate upon their minds. Just think of a woman who is capable of grasping all the great questions of the day, or a woman who had the talent that Joanna Baillie had, for instance, spending her time and thoughts mending John's stockings, keeping Sammy's aggressive knees inside his trowsers, or seeing that Jemima's face is clean."

"It is better that she should, isn't it, than that John should be stockingless, Sammy's knees appear, or Jemima's sweet features be buried under strata on strata," said Agnes.

"But I say there is no need of either. There are plenty of women whose faculties lie in the direction of stockings, trowsers, and clean faces; their highest aspirations are thus gratified. That is their department in life; let them fill it. But there are other women—and I do not think I flatter or am vain, Agnes, when I say that you and I may be of the number—who have intellects capable of something deeper, something higher. If our Heavenly Father

has blessed us with talents, ought not we to improve them? What sort of a world would this be if men wasted their talents and ability?"

"Men have greater opportunities to cultivate their talents," replied Agnes.

"I know they do; but it is partly the fault of women that it is so. They do not use their opportunities. If there is anything that vexes me it is to see half-a-dozen women pottering over some little affair that one could dispose of just as satisfactorily as that whole six. No, women, women of mind, allow their whole lives to be spent in the veriest trifles. Who is the most to blame, those who put the trifles in their way, or the women themselves, who have not character enough to say in word or deed I will not squander my powers thus; I am fitted for something better—I will fulfil my destiny?"

"Well, to come back to myself. You think I should refuse all household services that fall in my way, and make no effort to contribute towards the happiness of home."

"No, I don't say that. But need all your time be consumed in such ways, all spent in trifles, that when you try to sum them up at the end of the day or week have vanished. There is, I think, a vast amount of fussiness in families and housekeeping, and for just the reason that I have mentioned, three or four women spend their time over matters to which one or

two are fully equal. In my own case my mother and one sister keep the house just as well, and make home just as comfortable and pleasant for themselves and for father, and Sidney, when he is there, as it would be if I devoted all my faculties to compounding flour, eggs, butter, and sugar, thrusting skewers through poultry, dusting rooms, and so forth. They like such things better than I do, and I am sure there is no comparison between their skill and mine. If I were to spend my whole lifetime trying to fathom the mysteries of the menage, I should not know half as much about them as my younger sister does to-day. That is their department; Nature has fitted them for it; they are doing their appointed work; so, I believe, am I doing mine. There have been many good teachers, artists, and authors spoiled to make indifferent housekeepers."

"Father would never consent to my leaving home for any employment," said Agnes.

"No, I suppose not. Neither would my father have spared me had the world smiled as kindly on him; but your father cannot object to your cultivating your talents at home. I cannot but think that a little firmness and tact on your part would secure you the leisure you ought to have. If you suffer yourself to be drawn into the peck-measure round of home and social trifles, your fine abilities will be frittered away, and, like thousands of other women, you will run round in the peck-measure all your days."

CHAPTER III.

FRIENDS AROUND.

"Man, in society, is like a flower
 Blown in its native bed. 'Tis there alone
 His faculties, expanded in full bloom,
 Shine out, there only reach their proper use."

COWPER'S *Task*.

AGNES walked slowly home thinking of Miss Carlisle's arguments. There was force in them, no doubt; still, they served rather to increase than diminish her perplexity. Emmeline met her in the hall, saying, "You are late, Aggie. Doctor Anstace is in the parlour; he has been waiting some time to see you."

"You have just come from Miss Carlisle's, Miss Agnes," said the doctor, shaking hands with his young parishioner. "A very intellectual lady, but I have thought I would like to hint to her that there are things to be learned in this world that never have been or will be found between two bits of pasteboard. But to business. You will excuse my being abrupt. I have not for some time been exactly pleased with the state of things in our parish, so far as the young

people are concerned. Many of them are altogether too much taken up with light and frivolous amusements. I wish to try to bring them round to more substantial pleasures, to influence them through the social element."

"If the church does not cultivate the social elements in human nature, it is pretty certain the devil will," said Mr. Wadsworth.

"Exactly so, sir; exactly so. I have been talking of this matter with Mrs. Anstace. I would give more for her opinion in this case than for my own. She agrees with me that we have been lacking in care and vigilance, but could not decide whether it would be better to add new features to old organisations, hoping to infuse life into them, or to commence new enterprises; but was clearly of the opinion that young people understood best young people's wants and tastes, and spoke of Miss Agnes Wadsworth as a young lady well acquainted with, and popular among those whom we wish to reach, many of whom had been her schoolmates. 'I will send,' said Mrs. Anstace, 'and ask Miss Agnes to come informally and take tea with us.' But I thought best to come and state the case to your parents as well as yourself. I should have called earlier in the day, but unexpected interruptions have prevented me."

"He cannot always spend his day as he wishes," thought Agnes.

"My daughter will, I have no doubt, sir, be happy to give you and Mrs. Anstace any aid in her power," said Mrs. Wadsworth.

"Then, suppose we walk round to my house together, Miss Agnes. You will find Mrs. Anstace waiting to receive you, and I should like an hour in my study before tea."

"Melville will come and escort you home," said Mrs. Wadsworth.

Mrs. Anstace and Agnes examined the parish list, and noted the names of those families that consisted in part of young people, and concluded that it was best, if possible, to induce them to unite with the ladies' circle already in existence, for Doctor Anstace had objections to scattering forces."

"Now we have a complete roll of the recruits we want to bring in," said Mrs. Anstace, "we must, I think, call upon all of them, personally or by proxy, before the annual meeting, a week from next Thursday. My engagements are particularly pressing. Could not you, Agnes, take the whole oversight of the canvass, and get some of your young friends to assist you?"

Agnes thought of her conversation with Miss Carlisle, and tried to excuse herself, foreseeing that if she accepted the commission she would be obliged to dispatch more of those missives so distasteful to her fellow-student,—notes of apology.

The clergyman and lady were both disappointed,

and the former expressed his disappointment in plain terms.

"Why, really, Miss Agnes, the service will involve some labour, some fatigue, but I cannot see why it should be a disagreeable one. It will take time that might be more pleasantly appropriated. Grant that; but is there not here an opportunity such as seldom presents itself, of influencing your young friends for good. I thought we could depend upon you to help us in this commencement of an attempt to stem the tide of frivolity that is sweeping our young people before us. Is there a lion in the way?"

Ashamed to say that her own desire for mental improvement and Miss Carlisle's frowns were the obstacles, Agnes took the list and promised to canvass the parish, or secure assistance that would enable her to report to Mrs. Anstace the last of the next week.

Agnes called first upon Bessie Banister, well knowing that if Bessie's co-operation was gained, the attendance of "the set" of which the lively girl was a leader was secured. Bright and gay as Bessie always was, she had allowed her more sedate friend an occasional insight into the depths of her nature, and Agnes was aware that beneath the bubbling, sparkling surface, there was a steady current of deep feeling.

Agnes caught sight of Bessie at the window; but when the street door was opened a lively strain was

being played on the piano in the parlour, and a fresh, young voice was singing, not in the latest Italian or German style, but in the old fashion that Nature has taught ever since the creation to those on whom she has bestowed the gift of song.

“Come in the evening,
Or come in the morning,
Come when you're looked for,
Or come without warning;
Kisses and welcome you'll find here before you,
And the oftener you come here the more I'll adore you.”

“Practising, Bessie?” Agnes asked.

“Practising! No. I was welcoming my dearest, sweetest, loveliest Aggie,” returned Bessie, throwing her arms about her visitor's neck. “Now take off your bonnet and stay all day. What a darling to come so early,” said Bessie, seizing Agnes' bonnet-strings and destroying the bow that she had so carefully arranged.

“No, no! really I can't stop but a few minutes. The annual meeting of the Sewing Circle is next week Thursday.”

Bessie opened her eyes widely, assumed an air of intense interest, and replied, “Is it neow? dew tell. I'm ever so much obleeged to you for coming bright and airly Monday morning, 'cause you know I should have felt drefful if I hadn't er know'd till next Sunday, when Doctor Anstace tells all our folks.”

"You are so much pleased to have the news in advance, I am glad I came to tell you first. You will go to the meeting and join the society, won't you?"

"Oh, I couldn't."

"But you can, and you will, to oblige me, if for no other reason."

"Couldn't do it," said Bessie, shaking her head solemnly. "I haven't got any specs or any cap with white ribbons."

"Nonsense! What has that to do with it? Come, Bessie, stop laughing, and talk seriously. Do go. Mrs. Anstace says the society needs just such life and energy as yours."

"Blarney! Well, I'll talk seriously. Just such life and energy as mine is exactly what they don't want. I went once or twice; Aunt Josie wanted me to, so she joined me, paid a dollar or so for me. It used to be awfully slow. I'd sit and cobble on some patchwork or cotton cloth. I hate to sew, and you know I never could keep sober in school when I tried to. It was just like two children looking at each other to see which will laugh first. Once Mrs. Somerby was reading the Marys, or the Marthas, or the Hannahs; some book about good women, I've forgotten who. I got dreadful tired of sitting still and being good. There was Mattie Ormond on the other side of the room; she looked at me so comically

that I snickered right out. Mrs. Somerby stopped and put her specs up on her forehead, and looked at me as if I had been Queen of the Cannibal Islands, and had just eaten a whole missionary. I was in disgrace."

"Of course, Mrs. Somerby thought you laughed at her."

"I didn't. I never went after that. They didn't want my style of 'life and energy' there."

"The ladies want you to come and help them now, and really Doctor and Mrs. Anstace will be very much disappointed if you don't."

"I will tell you what I will do. If you will go to our sociable, I will go to your circle next week."

Agnes had previously declined an invitation to the sociables, which were conducted by an association of her acquaintances, who met alternately at the residences of the members, but now she promised to be present at the next gathering, and left Bessie, convinced not only that it would be useless to ask her to aid in the canvass, but, moreover, that she would not be a very efficient assistant.

Call after call was made. Some were flattered by the courtesy, and readily agreed to attend the meeting. Some made excuses; but not one of "the daughters who dwelt at ease" would consent to help Agnes in the work then on hand. "It was so close upon the New Year; there was so much to do just

now—a pair of slippers to finish for papa, a breakfast shawl for mamma, a present for auntie, etc., etc., etc. Jerusha Hayes, to whom an unthrifty father, an invalid mother, and young brothers and sisters had taught the value of time, offered to give hours which must be redeemed by forethought and extra exertion.

“I do not like to take your time,” Agnes said, “you have so little you can call your own.”

“That is just the reason I want to help; it is so seldom I can do anything. And, besides, it is too much for you to make all these calls alone.”

Agnes was rewarded for her efforts by seeing many of her acquaintances at the parsonage. The interest of the family was much enhanced by the presence of Mr. Carver, a young gentleman well known in the parish as a former student with the minister, and who was now finishing his theological course in the Hillver Seminary. He had in his possession several letters recently received at the rooms of the Home Missionary Society, and, at the request of the hostess, read them to the company. They were letters that recounted tales of suffering, such as more than one man of education, refinement, and self-respect has been driven to pen, driven by the sight of suffering wife and children.

Bessie Banister listened with moistened eyelids, and when Mr. Carver ceased reading, brought the blush to many a cheek, by declaring that “it was

stingy mean for the good folks to send men out West among the wild cats and Indians, and leave them to starve. Come, girls, let's see what we can do," she added, and flew about the room from one to another, asking what each one would give towards filling a box that she would send "instanter." In a surprisingly short space of time she had secured the promise of a large case, goods enough to pack it to the brim, and money sufficient to gladden the hearts chilled by the neglect of those who sat by warm firesides.

"Well begun, Miss Bessie," said the Doctor.

"We have our clue, Agnes," said Mrs. Anstace, in an undertone, "we will add a home missionary committee to our board of officers, put you at the head, and choose Bessie secretary. Strike while the iron is hot."

Almost before Agnes knew it, the committee was nominated, and her conscience admonished her that she ought not to place any impediment in its way. She turned to look for the originator of this movement, and there was Bessie, with her hands over her mouth, trying to control her ever present sense of the ludicrous.

"What now, Bessie? Nothing very droll about that committee, is there?"

"Oh, no, that's not it. But do see old Lady Carlisle don't she look funny? Here is Mrs. Anstace taking her promising young bookworm right out of

her hands. The same young bookworm that was going to bloom out a most marvellous butterfly and astonish all the natives."

Agnes could not resist the temptation to laugh, while Bessie so correctly translated the teacher's expression; but not wishing to be a traitor to her friends, recovered her gravity as soon as possible, and retorted, "Old Lady Carlisle! She is about three years nearer to having a right to be called venerable than your ladyship. I wonder if there is one thing you would not laugh at, Bessie?"

"Yes, more than one. I would not laugh at my Bible, or at my Saviour, and that is more than some of the good people can say."

"What do you mean, Bessie?"

"I mean that some of the jokes that good people crack make my flesh crawl. My mother taught me, when I was a little bit of a girl, that there are some things that are holy; but I have seen the holiest of them twined into ridicule in books written by people a great deal better than you and I, I don't doubt, and by people of talent, too. Agnes, if some of those jokes were spoken by an actor on a stage, or a lecturer on a platform, he would be hissed for his profanity, and deserve it too. Poh! I am sermonising. What is the reason I sermonise to you? I don't to any one else now mother is gone."

Bessie had spoken louder than she was aware,

and was overheard by the two gentlemen standing near. "Solid metal down deep there," said Doctor Anstace.

"Indeed there is," replied Mr. Wadsworth. "I have often been at a loss to know where the link was between Bessie and Agnes, they are so unlike. Now I understand it. Her mother being dead yet speaketh."

The office of secretary of the new committee was exactly suited to Bessie's ardent temperament. She would not have had patience to wait the slow germination of seed buried deep, but must have become disheartened if it had not sprung up and borne fruit at once. In almost every instance, when she sent a box, or other contribution, the acknowledgment was speedily returned, and not unfrequently thanks were transmitted, in childish dialect, for the toys which the young collector never forgot to include in the package. Mr. Carver also was careful to keep Bessie informed where benefactions were particularly needed, and whenever those sent were mentioned in the regular correspondence of the Missionary Society. Though she was really deeply interested in the work, and would have been quite unwilling to drop it, the fulfilment of Agnes' promise to attend the sociables was claimed, and her regular presence at these gatherings made a *sine qua non* of the secretary's retention of the office.

Agnes enjoyed the sociables, which were conducted with little formality, and as Bessie was one of the prime movers, did not lack life and fun. But they involved the renewal of school intimacies, that, in her eagerness to keep her appointments with Miss Carlisle, had been suffered to fall away. Was the time taken from books and accorded to "friends around" a dead loss? Agnes could not believe it was.

CHAPTER IV.

THE NEST STIRRED UP.

MR. WADSWORTH had retired from active business five years before the date of the commencement of our story, and taken up his residence in Dartfield, a large town twelve miles from the mercantile centre, where his property had been accumulated. Being his own agent and bookkeeper, the care of his constantly increasing estate occupied much of his time.

He retained for his own use a small room, which he called his office, on the first floor of his house. It was one morning in the early part of the year that he sat at his desk in this room opening letters. They were all disposed of but one, which, knowing that it did not relate to business, he had purposely left till last.

"Now for Carver," soliloquised Mr. Wadsworth, breaking the seal; "he writes a long letter."

He reads the well-filled sheet, with now and then an exclamation of surprise not unmingled with dissatisfaction. A second time his eyes followed the clearly-traced characters, the meaning of which his mind seemed reluctant to take in. For some minutes he remained with his elbow resting on the desk, and his hands supporting his head; then, starting up with a sigh of relief, he opened the door, and speaking to Bridget in the hall, asked, "Is Miss Emmeline in her room?"

"It's downstairs she is, talking to 'Phia,' sir."

"Ask her if she will come into the office for a few moments."

Emmeline came, thinking that her father wished to consult her with regard to a question connected with the family finances; but when the open letter was shown her, and she recognised the handwriting, the deep blush that suffused her cheek told that she suspected its contents. Her father watched her narrowly while she read, "I am a poor man, as you well know. I have chosen, nay, I believe I have been called, to a profession that holds out the prospect of abundance to few who embrace it. I am aware what motive the world will impute to me in seeking the hand of a rich man's daughter. I care not for what the world may say, but I do care that the woman I

love, should she consent to link her fortunes with mine, will leave a home furnished with all the comforts which heart can desire for one so much more humble, rich only in affection.

"You will, I am sure, believe me, sir, when I assure you that no word of love for your daughter has ever passed my lips. More than once have I determined that no such word ever should pass my lips—that I would not ask her to leave a home of luxury for one of frugality. I am not, I think, a vacillating man, but I found it impossible to adhere to this determination without your assistance.

"Circumstances now render it important that I should learn my fate. A call to a parish in your State has just been extended to me. Should you bid me hope, I shall accept the call, and look forward to a life of quiet usefulness in my holy vocation. Should you bid me cast hope aside, I shall not despair of usefulness, but seek in a more distant field, and in devotion to a work that has sanctified lives more worthy than I can hope mine will ever be, acquiescence in the allotments of my all-wise Father in heaven." Then followed some details of plans and prospects.

Before Emmeline had read half the letter her father saw that he must relinquish the partly-formed hope that his daughter would authorise him to return an answer that would leave his family intact. To Emme-

line, simple and domestic in her taste, the economies of a country minister's wife had few terrors; none which did not pale and shrink when compared with the sterling worth of the man who sued for an acknowledged place in her affections. Mr. Wadsworth was the last man to make worldly self a barrier where "heart beat to heart."

The answer was returned. "Plead your own cause, I fear you will succeed. You have awakened me to the consciousness of a fact which, had I been a less fond father, I should have realised long ago, that other men as well as myself may think my daughters loveable. Frankly, however, I know of no other man from whom I should have taken the awakening so patiently."

Mr. Carver was not slow to avail himself of the permission given, and pleaded his cause so effectively that Emmeline consented to give him the right to call her wife immediately after his ordination. The house that had been occupied by the former minister of Alderton was rented, and Mr. Wadsworth proposed to enlarge, alter, and furnish according to his own taste; but Emmeline remonstrated, saying, "that for the first time she feared to trust her father; he would forget that while she was the daughter of a wealthy, generous man, she was to be the wife of a poor man, whose sole earthly dependence was his profession."

Agnes had now few leisure moments. As home

engagements became more pressing outside calls multiplied; and if the owners of idle hands are the only ones liable to be employed by the great malignant spirit, our heroine was quite safe from doing him service. Mr. Wadsworth insisted that if his daughter's housekeeping outfit and wedding wardrobe must be plain, it should be ample and thorough; and the younger sister was expected to assist in making purchases, in consulting with dressmakers and milliners, and in directing seamstresses.

A large company assembled at Mr. Wadsworth's on the appointed morning to witness the rite that would place Emmeline's hand for life in that of her betrothed. Agnes was her sister's bridesmaid, and Sidney Carlisle was Mr. Carver's groomsman. Though the collegian was by several years the young clergyman's junior, they had frequently met as tutor and taught, and as fellow-students, and a firm friendship had grown up between them.

The ceremony over, guests congratulated the newly-wedded pair, wished unbounded happiness, and departed. The bride went forth with "a smile on her lip and a tear in her eye," for much as she trusted him on whose arm she leaned, she knew that—

"When the young bride goes from her father's hall,
She goes unto love yet untried and new,—
She parts from love which has still been true."

CHAPTER V.

CONFLICTING CLAIMS.

"Now the wedding is over you will settle down to every-day life, Agnes, and I shall see you regularly again Wednesday and Saturday, shall I not?" said Miss Carlisle, lingering after the other guests had gone.

"I cannot say decidedly," was the reply. "I should be delighted to come, I need not tell you that."

"Indeed, I think it is your duty to try to resume your studies. As I have said in days gone by, to cultivate your fine talents."

"Ah! but where am I to find the time? It may seem absurd to you for me to make lack of time an excuse, but just think a moment. There is my committee work; the other girls often come in to ask me what we had better do. Then there is the Sociable Association I joined last winter; that takes more time than you would think, dressing, receiving the calls of the members and returning them. The boys, before they go to school in the morning, and when they come home, whenever they are in the house, in fact, come to me for help in a thousand little ways, and Brownie brings his reins for me to untangle, and his

horse or other broken playthings for me to mend. Mother and father, too, depend upon my opinion, and even advice, more and more every day. And last, but by no means least, now that Emmeline is gone, a great deal that she used to do for the comfort of the family will fall to my lot. We did not one of us know, until there was danger of our losing her, how much the order and regularity of the house depended on our self-sacrificing sister."

"Ah, yes," answered Miss Carlisle with a long-drawn sigh, and a face expressive of utter disgust, "I see just what life is coming to with you; just what it has with thousands of other talented women. 'Tis pitiful, 'tis wondrous pitiful, that women with immortal souls should be nothing but forms to hang millinery on; nothing but simpering dolls with the parrot's power to run through a set of conventional phrases; 'How do you do?' 'And how is your husband, and that sweet little boy?' 'Tis a beautiful day, is it not?' 'Have you read Mr. Exaggeration's new novel?' 'No.' 'Do read it. I know you will like it.'" Miss Carlisle pursed up her lips, drawled, and simpered, proving herself a good mimic.

Agnes smiled and said, "You are sarcastic, but your sarcasm does not touch me. You know that is not my way."

"No, it is not," replied Miss Carlisle; "but if that style is pitiful, it is shameful that women fitted by

nature and education to shine, should spend their lives untangling worsted reins, repairing damaged wooden quadrupeds. What folly to erect substantial buildings, place in them men of science and women of brains to prepare young ladies for their future august employment. An A. B. C. school is quite adequate to their needs. Why teach Latin, Greek, Geometry, and all the 'ologies' to the future astute unsnarler of reins and gluer of quadrupeds. Parents are, I think, much to blame in this matter. I should like to know why John's and James's talents and smartness are so carefully fostered when Mary's and Abigail's talents, just as great as their brothers', are sufficiently cultivated when the girls have passed through the same school course that the neighbour's girls pass through, and why the smartness of the sisters is expended on daily patchwork, that in real value bears about the same proportion to the time and labour expended that those bedquilts do that we see hung up at the cattle shows, labelled, 'this quilt is composed of one thousand pieces, and forty thousand stitches were set in it.' What littleness! What miserable littleness!"

"Then, if I understand you, you would have me despise domestic employment of all kinds, stand above them, and look down on them. What was it Doctor Anstace said last Sunday? Something like this—'The affectionate care and forethought of the

individual members of the family, particularly of women, serve as lubricators of the home machinery, preventing irritating jar, nerve-fretting grate, and wearing friction.’”

“I did not say you were to look down upon all domestic care; but suppose Melville, when he is a few years older, were to attempt to study at home so that he might be better prepared for college, the medical or the law school, would he be constantly called upon to oil creaking hinges, open obstinate windows, do a thousand things that he could do to make home comfortable? No, both father and mother would carefully guard him from interruption during his study hours.

“Your father, if he once realised the actual state of the case, would, I am sure, throw his influence on the side of your mental improvement. Your mother is a woman of great latent energy; and if she had her attention fully aroused to the value of time to you, would ward off trivial interruptions. But I have been delivering one of my educational lectures, as Bessie Banister used to call them. When I get upon this subject I hardly know where to stop. I must bid you goodbye, hoping to see you next Saturday.”

“Now, Miss Agnes, jest you leave us to our distruction. Your pa has gone out with some of the gentlemen that was to the wedding. Guess we’ll wash them glasses up right here, Miss Jones. And

your ma, she's gone to get rested. I told her the helpfulest thing she could do was to go and get rested, if she'd take Brownie with her. He was poking into everything, Bridget couldn't do nothin'. Bridget, you might go and sweep the parlour chamber, now Miss Carlisle's gone. I thought she never would go. I'll go and sweep the parlour pretty soon. Don't nobody but me sweep the parlour; there's too many gimcracks round, and the helpfulest thing you can do, Miss Agnes, is jest to go and leave us to our distruction, and we'll have everything all to rights in a jiffy."

This harangue arrested Agnes at the dining-room threshold. It was delivered by Apphia, who had doffed her holiday attire, enveloped her head in a square of white cotton, and was in her element directing a corps of assistants who were gathering up fragments of wedding-cake, and collecting plates and glasses.

Apphia was a member of the now almost extinct order of "American help." "Leave me to my distruction," was one of her pet phrases. Though it could not be construed by aid of any grammar or dictionary, it was perfectly intelligible to all of Mr. Wadsworth's family, and no one except Brownie hesitated to obey when the order was issued.

Reader, have you ever walked out on a summer's day, when, lowering clouds suddenly warning you

that a shower was approaching, you have turned your face homeward, ever and anon glancing up at the blackening sky, and quickening your footsteps as you saw that the danger was becoming more imminent, and reaching home just as the torrent descended, heard it beat upon the roof over your head, and dash against the window at your right hand? And when the shower was over, have you thrown up the sash that you might inhale the odour of the refreshed earth, and enjoy "the clear shining after rain?" If you have, you will understand why Brownie only had the hardihood to stand between Apphia and her "distruction."

Agnes closed the door, and went to her mother's chamber in search of Brownie. Mrs. Wadsworth had lain down; a little curly head was on the pillow beside her, their eyes fast closed in slumber.

In the solitude of her own room Agnes reviewed Miss Carlisle's reasonings. "They were less influential than the arguments that had been brought up a year ago. Were the premises incorrect, or was the teacher's standpoint so different from that of the former pupil, that the advice given could not be safely followed?"

Agnes had reached one of those places in life where two roads meet. Inclination, and perhaps duty, pointed to one. Affection and duty, was it, or weakness, pointed to the other? She had been

repeatedly assured by those who did not flatter her on other points, that her talents were above mediocrity ; it could but be laudable to wish to cultivate them. "Did not her Heavenly Father give her talents, intending they should be cultivated ? Ought she to throw her education quite away ?" Again the question came up, "when the 'great householder' returned, would He not demand why His money had not at least been put at usury ?"

These were doubts she must settle for herself. She could not, as Miss Carlisle had hinted, ask advice of her father. Kind, generous, living in the happiness of his family, more thoughtful for their welfare than for his own, could she say that any service she was able to render him was burdensome ?

Neither could she go to her mother for advice. Memory carried Agnes back to the time when the stranger came to the motherless children, and gained their love by patient tenderness and gentle firmness ; to the lingering illness of her elder brother, and to the untiring attention of the second mother alleviating the pain, and soothing the weariness of the decaying body, and casting light on the way to the dark valley.

Melville was just the age when a boy begins to feel his own importance. Is of more account in his own estimation than he will be should he rise to high positions. Jealous of authority, when he comes to

her with stories of youthful pranks and scrapes, should she repel his confidence without a word of sisterly caution and influence, and give him to understand that she is above listening to such follies.

Rufus, frank and heedless, depending upon his sister for explanations and assistance, when his teachers, discouraged by his oft-repeated, careless blunders, tried to throw him back on his own resources; was she to tell him that translations and derivations, roots and demonstrations, were far more important to his sister than his mistakes and the ridicule of his schoolmates.

Stanley, fond of books of travel and adventures, and confident that they must be just as engrossing to others as to himself, frequently offered to read one of the marvellous narratives to her; should she turn from him to the far more interesting volumes on her own table?

Brownie last, and in stature least, in the household, was by no means least in the hearts of the older members; when he came, laid his head in her lap, prattled of fun and frolic, or sobbed out his baby grief, should she shake him off with the excuse, "busy for herself."

On the other hand, she called to mind Miss A., whose well trained musical powers were electrifying the world; Miss B., whose conceptions of truth, made permanent in spotless marble, were calling

forth the encomiums of all lovers of art; Miss C., the work of whose skilful pencil was compelling the admiration of all appreciative souls; Miss D., whose eloquent words, glowing upon the printed page, were rousing the enthusiasm of many who had slumbered at their posts; Mrs. E., who could point to scores of women who were acting nobly their part in life, and say, "they were my pupils; to my training they and the world are debtors." Had these women no other incentive to raise themselves above their girlhood's peers than the sordid need of food and raiment? Had they no home ties? Would the world at large, their own families, have been gainers, had they allowed petty affairs to overlie and smother the talents that results had clearly shown were inherent in each?

Agnes dreamed on, taking no note of time. Apphia's "distruction" was completed, and all traces of unusual stir had vanished. Brownie's nap had come to an end, and he had been in Bridget's charge an hour. It was his voice that roused Agnes from her reverie. "Where's Addie? I want my dear sister Addie." There was no resisting the appeal. Agnes opened the door, saying, "Here, Brownie, here is sister Aggie."

"I couldn't make him come with me till he was afther seeing you," the Hibernian apologised. "It's missin' Miss Emmeline he is."

"Mummer's head aches. Poor mummer! Mustn't make a noise!" whispered the little fellow. "Emmerine's gone; won't tell Brownie stories. Brownie go to bed like a little man when Emmerine tell him a 'tory."

"Will Brownie go to bed like a little man if Aggie will tell him a story?" his sister asked.

"Yes, me will."

"He used to go to bed beautiful when Miss Imline talked to him," said Bridget, wishing to secure Agnes' help.

Agnes took the child's hand, led him to the nursery, and, while Bridget undressed him, told the oft-repeated but ever-beautiful story of the boy who slept in the temple, and waked, for God called him.

"I say my prayers; and, Addie, please sing, just little," pleaded the small encroacher. With bowed head Agnes listened, while, kneeling in his crib, Brownie repeated the simple petitions he had been taught, and added, "Bless my papa, and my mummer, and my sisters, and my brothers, and my dear sister Addie." Then in a low voice she sang—

"Jesus, Gentle Shepherd, hear me,
Bless thy little lamb to-night;
In the darkness be thou near me,
Keep me safe till morning light!"

The first line was hardly sung when the heavy eyelids began to droop, and before the verse was ended

they were closed in sleep. After kissing the soft cheek, Agnès crept from the nursery and descended to the dining-room, where the family were sitting down to tea.

"One chair missing!" said Mr. Wadsworth. "I feel like an old man now that I have a married daughter."

"I wonder if she will make such nice plum-puddings as Emmeline did?" said Rufus.

"I think she will, just as nice," replied his father.

"I know she won't make such a hotch-potch as you did of your geography lesson yesterday," said Melville.

"Never mind the geography lesson now," said Mr. Wadsworth, "especially if it was not recited well. No unpleasant topic at the table is, you know, one of the standing rules of the house."

"Birdie, birdie! dear little birdie want his breakfast. Come, Addie, come!"

So begged Brownie the next morning, at the same time taking a roll from the table with one hand and tugging at Agnes' dress with the other. It had been Emmeline's custom to allow her brother to give the feathered songsters a morning meal, and Brownie so confidently expected that Addie would do just as 'Merline had done, that the younger sister would have been hard-hearted indeed had she disappointed the petitioner within and the blithe little waiters without.

So Brownie threw the crumbs from the window, and in a suppressed voice uttered his delight. Agnes joined in the bird-talk with all the child's *abandon*, and did not notice that though the rest of the family had left the room her father still lingered. He stood a few moments, a father's pride swelling his heart as he gazed upon the scene. The bright landscape without, the fair young girl, and the merry boy. Mr. Wadsworth approached, and passed his arm about his daughter's waist. Agnes raised her head, and her eyes met those of her father. "You will not be in such a hurry to fly away from the home-nest as Emmeline has been."

"The home-nest is so warm and pleasant, I am afraid I shall never want to fly away," answered Agnes, drawing closer to the breast that would fain have sheltered her from life's storms.

"We must all do our best to keep it warm and pleasant."

"Yes, dear father, yes."

"You will be considerate of the mother-bird now that your own wings are growing strong and her's begin to droop."

Agnes was startled. Did her father intend to intimate that there was cause for alarm in the state of her mother's health? "Is there any trouble I do not know of, father? Is not mother as well as usual?"

"I do not know that she is not; that is not what I

meant ; but I have thought that she buried the best of her life in William's grave. Those days and nights of watching were a terrible tax upon her."

Ah! yes, it was thus that much of what Miss Carlisle pleased to call Mrs. Wadsworth's "latent energy" had been expended. It was soon after William's death that the headaches from which she had so often suffered commenced ; soon after his death that she began to resign her household cares to Emmeline. Agnes' perplexities were fast vanishing. The path of duty was stretching plainer and plainer before her. It was not the way that she would have chosen ; but love, hearty home-love, would shed light upon it, and guide the pilgrim that she became neither footsore nor weary.

"Birdie got all his breakfast," said Brownie. "Now, papa, we go see horsie."

"The little man must go and look after his stud," replied Mr. Wadsworth, lifting Brownie to his shoulder and perching him there. The child threw his arms about his father's neck, clasped his hands, and was borne off in the direction of the stable.

"I will go and see what I can do for the mother-bird," thought Agnes. Mrs. Wadsworth was in the store-room.

"Taking stock, mother?"

"Yes ; but I must go and put an end to that dispute between Apphia and Bridget. How strange it

is that Apphia cannot learn that Bridget will not be argued out of superstitions. Apphia is a most faithful creature, but either she has more crotchets than she used to, or I have less patience. How we shall all miss Emmeline."

Meanwhile high words were passing between the uncompromising Protestant and the bigoted Catholic, and were plainly audible to mother and daughter, though the door between the storeroom and kitchen was closed.

"It's a mortal sin ye decaved me inter."

"I deceive you! I never deceived anybody in my life. I told you 'twas no harm to eat meat that day; and no it wasn't, that Friday or any other Friday.

"I'll never belave yer agin."

"Just as you like. If you won't believe me, I s'pose you'll believe your priest, and you'll swallow a great many more lies from him than you would have a chance to from me, I can tell you. No man should tell me when I should eat fish, flesh, or fowl, and when I shouldn't."

"Let me go and tell Apphia what is wanted, mother," said Agnes.

"No, my dear, I will go. You do not like house-keeping, and are not used to it."

"Just let me try being housekeeper a little while; you cannot tell how well I may succeed till I have tried."

"Well, my dear, try if you wish to, but I think you will tire of it. When you do, you can give up."

Agnes listened to some general directions, opened the door, and faced the disputants. Bridget ignominiously fled, leaving an unfinished sentence to take care of itself; but Apphia, nothing daunted, gave the newcomer the benefit of her opinion.

"Now, Miss Agnes, isn't it a shame those priests can lead folks by the nose so. Well, I don't s'pose they know no better. I'm thankful I was brought up where one-half of the world ain't slaves to t'other half. I didn't have a priest to tell me I shouldn't eat meat Friday or a Monday. Guess he'd had hard work to stopped me if I'd wanted to."

"It's a free country, and all of us have a right to our opinions. I have often heard you say so."

"Well, so 'tis a free country, and all of us have a right to our 'pinion, but there oughter be some sense in 'em."

Apphia was a firm believer in the axiom, "All men are born free and equal," and indulged in a profound contempt for those who did not claim and exercise the right of private judgment, and in a contempt hardly less profound for those whose private judgment did not lead them to conclusions akin to her own.

When Agnes Chickering left her rural home the bride of Melville Wadsworth, then head clerk in a

large importing house, Apphia Hopkins, a girl of twelve years, went with her to assist in the work of the unpretending housekeeping. The widow Hopkins had reluctantly parted with the eldest of her six children, saying that she "didn't s'pose she ought to expect she could keep them all together and fill all their mouths; they'd got to go to work for other folks sooner or later, and 'Phia might as well begin now." Apphia had been with the family in days of small means and great happiness, and in days of adversity and affliction. When money began to flow freely into the coffers of the husband, sickness laid its heavy hand upon the wife. Apphia stood beside the couch of her mistress, her friend; and when the mother's head was laid low beneath the sod, wrought for her children as no mere hireling could or would have done. No marvel surely that the faithful domestic was valued, not only for what she then was, but for what she had been.

As Mr. Wadsworth's means increased, the duties of the domestic became more onerous, and he proposed to provide her with an assistant, but Apphia protested. "She didn't want other folks round in her kitchen; they couldn't get nobody but a furriner, and ruther'n have one of them papists round her she'd work her fingers to the bone." Mr. Wadsworth said he had no doubt she would drop in the harness if she were allowed to have her own way, but it was his duty

to prevent it. So Bridgets and Noras, Marys and Katies had succeeded each other at longer and shorter intervals, the well-known straying habits of the Hibernian being aggravated by the onslaughts which Apphia persisted in making on "papist mummeries."

While we have been devoting our attention to the domestic, the new housekeeper has been waiting to consult her as to ways and means. The bill of fare was arranged for the day, not without some mistakes being made by the young novice, and good-naturedly corrected by the experienced cook. "You don't know quite so much about jints, and cuts, and puddins, and pies, as Miss Emmeline, but you 'll learn—you're bright."

Apphia cherished, but generally kept hidden, great respect for Agnes' mental powers, and when she made her last annual visit to her country relatives, had repeatedly boasted of the acquisitions of "our Miss Agnes." "She's smart, I tell you. She knows more than a good many men; she was at the top of 'em in the 'cademy last exhibition day. She's learnt all they can larn her."

"Apphia's idea of the use I am to make of my brightness is not much like Miss Carlisle's. She will be disappointed. So am I, but home must come first. Now for Bridget," thought Agnes.

We will spare our readers the details of the blunders, both ignorant and careless, of "the second girl," of

the repeated lessons on straight tablecloths, smooth salt-cellars, bright knives, and other "trifles," as Miss Carlisle would have termed them. All who have attempted to "train a servant," or who have listened to the complaints of mistresses—and who has not?—will be willing to dispense with the recital. Apphia often proffered her aid in this department, but Agnes soon learned that it was best to decline it. Bridget chose to take her directions from a denizen of the parlour, and the American helper too often preferred to do the work herself rather than "try to get it out of an Irish girl."

Agnes went to Miss Carlisle's to announce her decision that she could not keep up so extensive a course of study as she had commenced, and do justice to home and friends around, and that while she did not propose to throw her books aside, they must be secondary to more pressing objects. The statement was received with a sigh of resignation, and the remark, "I have done my best to tell you what I thought was your duty. If you do not take the same view of the matter that I do I am sorry, but the responsibility is yours." Agnes felt, however, that while she had her father's approval, the responsibility was not altogether hers.

CHAPTER VI.

MINISTER AND PEOPLE.

THE mails often brought greetings from the young minister and his bride. Emmeline's letters breathed a spirit of quiet happiness. Alderton was a farming town of moderate size, with scenery bold enough to gratify the love of the beautiful in one who had been accustomed to the more level aspect near the coast. Mr. Carver was fast winning the respect and confidence of the people. By no portion of the community was he better appreciated than by the solid old tillers of the soil, who meant to be always able to give "a reason for the faith that was in them."

The farmer's wives and daughters had at first shrank from intimate association with the "city lady," as, among themselves, they called Emmeline; for modest and plain as her dress and furniture were in her own estimation, they were rich and elegant in the eyes of nearly all the parish. But the unassuming manners of the wife heartily interested in her husband's work, and her knowledge of all "women's work" (as the phrase was understood twenty years ago, reader), which she neither paraded or concealed, convinced the most retiring that the minister's wife did not

intend to stand upon an eminence and look down upon the toilers below.

"What'll Selinda say now, I wonder. I always told her Mrs. Carver wan't 'stuck up,' and now I guess I can convince her of it," said Deacon Simmons, who was of an argumentative turn of mind, and never so well pleased as when he had "floored" an opponent.

"What now, father?" asked comfortable Mrs. Simmons, giving her yarn a twitch to take the ball out of the way of a frolicsome kitten.

"Well, I went down to the minister's with some hay. I've got more hay than I shall use that's plenty good enough for a cow, and I thought 'twas a pity for the minister to be using up his good hay."

"I couldn't think where you were going with that hay."

"That's where I was going. Well, I didn't just like to go to the fore door, so I knocked at the kitchen door, and if there wan't Mrs. Carver with a calico gown on and a big apron, rolling out pies. I wasn't going in; she looked as neat as a pin, and as pretty as any picture you ever saw; but I thought maybe she wouldn't want to see anybody when she wan't dressed up, but she invited me so cordial to go in, and apologised so cheery because she couldn't shake hands with me, that I went in and had just as pleasant a chat as ever I had in my life, she working away all the time *and telling* Sarah what to do."

"Well, work ain't anything to be ashamed of."

"I know 'tain't, and Mrs. Carver don't think so. I tell you, mother, our minister has got a good wife. The folks that have only seen her in the parlour don't know much about her. I guess I can floor Selinda the next time she says she's 'stuck up.' I wish I hadn't happened to have my old frock on though. I forgot all about it before I went. O mother! there's one thing I forgot," said the whole-hearted deacon, stopping in the doorway; "Mrs. Carver's sister is coming to stay a little while. She can't stay long; she is the main spoke at home now Mrs. Carver's gone. We must ask the young lady here to tea. I wish the sleighing would come on, and we'd get up a sleigh ride, and show her how country folks enjoy themselves."

"Well, father, anything you like. If I am getting to be an old woman, you know I always enjoy a good time, and seeing other folks enjoy themselves."

"You're always telling about being an old woman. Now I'm getting old I know, because I ain't so spry as I used to be, and I suppose you must be growing old, because we've been married hard on to forty years; but you don't look a bit older to me than you did when first you come here."

The door closed behind the husband, and the wife, glancing in the glass, adjusted her afternoon cap, saying, "Well, time hasn't been very hard on me,

but that's because I've had one of the best husbands that ever the Lord blessed a woman with."

Mr. Carver's parish was situated three miles from the college where Sydney Carlisle was pursuing his studies, and the young man often spent his Sundays with his old friend. A pedestrian excursion of three miles was no task to one who seldom had any other companion than his books, any other resort than the college buildings and his boarding-house. No task he deemed it, for valued friends, a bright fireside, and a cordial welcome were the prospect.

Agnes paid the expected visit. It had been promised before her sister's marriage, and was unlike any visit she had paid before in two respects. She was for the first time to be the guest of her only sister, and for the first time she left her home where her labours would be missed. She was duly invited to tea by Mrs. Simmons, and entertained with abounding hospitality. Sleighing coming on opportunely, the genial deacon organised an old-fashioned country sleigh ride, which was heartily enjoyed by all the participants; but in Agnes' estimation the most delightful element was the evident satisfaction of the good old deacon himself, who made her his special charge.

Sidney Carlisle displayed to the visitor the college cabinets, libraries—all, in short, of interest within and about the halls of learning that he had trodden for the last three years. Agnes had become acquainted

with him through his letters to his sister, but had not seen him until Emmeline's wedding-day, and then for a few moments only, as he was obliged to leave soon after the ceremony. Now she saw him under very favourable circumstances, in a home-circle where he was a familiar guest, and again when he could speak at length, without the suspicion of pedantry, of sciences of which he was an enthusiastic votary. Agnes' acquirements were sufficient to make her an interested and intelligent listener; and it was with much pleasure that she learned that there was a probability of Mr. Carlisle's delivering a course of lectures in Dartfield during the winter vacation.

The time allotted to Agnes' visit passed rapidly, and she was again at home,—welcomed there as she had never been welcomed before after a short absence. Do you say, reader, that selfishness added cordiality to the greeting? Agnes should have been valued for what she was, not for what she did. Grant it, if you will; but how are we to judge our fellow-mortals except by their acts? Are we not, one and all, valued for what we do? Look the world over, and then come close home and look at your own acquaintances and friends: who are those you honour, value, and love? Those who claim respect and affection, offering no equivalent, or those who, by noble deeds and kindly acts, have given proof of minds and hearts worthy of your admiration and love,—have, almost before you knew it yourself, compelled your admira-

tion, your love. Yes, the world, should we attract its attention, our friends, our own households (except in some rare instances), will estimate us by our deeds. It is true of the king on his throne, the merchant in his counting-room, the artizan at his bench, the father, mother, son, daughter, brother, and sister at the fireside; yes, and often of the helpless sufferer on his couch: "by their fruits ye shall know them."

CHAPTER VII.

BEREAVEMENT.

SATURDAY was damp and chilly, and a cold mist, freezing as it fell, made the weather far from agreeable; but on Sunday morning the sun shone clearly, and one of those warm days that so often come in January succeeded. The sexton of Doctor Anstace's church—a man of the best intentions, who would have been glad to please all—was the victim of a kind of hallucination. If Saturday was cold, the following Sunday must, of course, be cold also; and the two tall stoves at the foot of the aisles were made to do their uttermost under vigorous treatment and a liberal supply of anthracite.

The idea that the free air of heaven, one of God's best, most liberal gifts to man, is a prime aid to devotion, though often clearly and emphatically stated to

the painstaking doorkeeper, was completely overshadowed by the counter idea that "people couldn't worship the Lord acceptably when they was all the time thinking how cold they was."

If some half-suffocated listener ventured to slip a sash a few inches, another hearer was sure to shrug his shoulders and draw up his coat-collar; still others to hack and twist their handkerchiefs about their throats; and scarcely had the effects of the oxygen that had found its way into the lungs of the aforesaid half-suffocated, and his fellow-sufferers begun to show themselves in brighter looks and roused attention, when the gap at which the life-giving current had entered was closed, and the sash fastened tightly in its place.

On the Sunday of which we speak the stoves belched forth a stifling heat, and the windows and doors were securely closed lest the torrid temperature should be reduced. Five hundred pairs of lungs had over and over again inhaled and exhaled the compound atmosphere during the opening services.

Doctor Anstace rose to announce his text. There was a slight flutter in the congregation as each person disposed himself to listen comfortably. Soon heads began to droop, and eyelids to rise and fall in vain endeavours to repel drowsiness. Some of the most vigorous, whom one might think carried a reservoir of air in their chests, as camels do of water in their stomachs, were wide awake, and knew that their

minister was giving them "beaten oil," the result of close mental effort and of ripe scholarship.

Others from time to time nestled in their seats, vaguely conscious that they were losing thoughts of more than common beauty and rare fitness to their soul's needs, thoughts that their sluggish brains could not receive. Others again had ceased to resist the assaults of "the drowsy god," and were quietly, heavily slumbering. Several times the speaker had been on the point of asking for a small portion of the boon that God had so freely bestowed and man had so jealously denied, but had desisted from the fear that he might create a diversion as fatal to the design of his message as the leaden dulness that had settled over the majority of his congregation. He wished he had done so, when his sermon was brought to a sudden stop by an occurrence that effectually aroused every sleeper.

Mr. Wadsworth's head fell heavily forward, and had not Melville supported him, he would have slipped from his seat. Doctor Winslow and other gentlemen sprang to his aid, and in the arms of four men he was borne helpless, unconscious to the vestry. Mrs. Wadsworth had been detained at home by her old enemy, the headache. Agnes, awakened from the stupor that overpowered her as well as many others, not knowing how great was the calamity that had befallen her, was transfixed with terror. For a moment her limbs refused to obey her will, but Mel-

ville, pushing by his brothers, took her hand and almost lifted her from her seat. Leaning upon him, she followed the men who bore her father from the church.

The motion and change of air caused Mr. Wadsworth to revive, and opening his eyes slightly, he said, "I shall be better soon; don't alarm my family," then sank back again into unconsciousness. The sound of his voice gave Agnes the strength she needed. However serious her father's condition might be, life was not extinct; she was not hopeless; there yet remained something to be done. With those thoughts came ability to aid the physicians in preparing and administering the restoratives that had been brought.

The remedies soon began to take effect, colour slowly returned to the ashen-hued cheek, and the fluttering pulse gained steadiness. Then Agnes remembered what her father's first wish would be, and beckoning Stanley to her in a voice too low, as she supposed, for the sick man to hear, directed him to wait until the congregation was dismissed, then go and tell his mother that his father did not feel quite able to walk, but would ride home soon, but to be careful not to alarm her. Doctor Winslow added, "Tell her, my boy, that the church was very warm, and your father has fainted." Mr. Wadsworth's eyes followed his son as he left the vestry, and then were turned on his daughter. Agnes knew that he had heard the message and approved it.

Doctor Anstace omitted a part of his sermon, came and spoke a few words of sympathy, and promised to call in the evening. Mr. Wadsworth was soon able, with the help of Doctor Winslow, to get into a carriage. When he reached home it was with difficulty that he could be prevailed upon to go to his own room, and promise to stay there the remainder of the day, so anxious was he to allay the fears of his family. Mrs. Wadsworth, knowing that her husband had been far from well for some days before, was overwhelmed with grief and apprehension, and took the least hopeful view of his illness.

Agnes tried to get Doctor Winslow's opinion, but received evasive answers only. "It was a wonder every one in the church had not fainted. She must not be too much concerned. Must do her best to quiet her mother's fears; above all things, they must be cheerful in her father's room; she could see for herself that nothing troubled him so much as having them look sad and worried. He would come again in the afternoon, then he hoped to find his patient better." But before the afternoon was far spent, flushed cheeks and brightening eyes gave unmistakable indications of increasing illness. Doctor Winslow called and prescribed cooling potions to be administered at regular intervals.

Agnes would gladly have been her father's nurse for the night, but Mrs. Wadsworth vetoed the proposition, saying that she would have a temporary

couch arranged, and as she was a light sleeper could supply her husband's needs. It was useless for Agnes to urge her own greater strength and the ill effects to her mother of watching. Doctor Winslow confirmed her decision. "Miss Agnes," he said, as he was about leaving the house, "get a good night's sleep, and don't waste your energies; you may need them all."

"O doctor! father is not going to be very sick."

"I hope not; I hope not. There are some premonitory symptoms of lung fever, but we will do our best to throw it off. I met him yesterday and told him he ought to take care of that cold, but he never would take care of his own health."

Mr. Wadsworth passed a restless night, and in the morning Doctor Winslow pronounced the case one of lung fever. That oppressive stillness that tells more eloquently than words of dangerous sickness, settled over the house. Emmeline came and took Brown to her house. The paid nurse crept stealthily about the chamber. The boys trod the carpeted floors with slippered feet, and spoke with "bated breath." Apphia ceased her jangles with Bridget, and Bridget, "clumsy Bridget," went about her work with cautious movement and silent tongue. The life of the head of the household hung by a thread, which the slightest indiscretion on the part of his attendants might sever.

Mrs. Wadsworth seldom left the apartments of the sick man. It was in vain to represent to her that she

was taxing a frame long since enfeebled; that for her children's sake, if not for her own, she must spare herself. She answered, that there was, there could be, no relief for her so long as her husband's life was in danger, that as soon as he was better she would take a long rest. She had a lounge placed in a room adjoining that where Mr. Wadsworth lay, and reclining there would sometimes fall into a troubled sleep, only to rise hastily and go and look at the sufferer, whenever the sound of any unusual movement of the night watcher fell upon her ear.

To Agnes' intense anxiety for her father was added a hardly less wearing solicitude for her mother. Many a night as her weary head pressed the pillow she murmured, "O God, make not my burden heavier than I can bear."

When, after weeks of suspense, Doctor Winslow reported improvement in his patient, though the amendment was so slight as to be invisible to all but the alert, skilful physician, the relief was at first so great that it seemed as if she had never known anxiety or fatigue. Mr. Wadsworth's progress towards convalescence was slow but steady, and he was at last pronounced out of danger. Then, and not till then, the devoted wife consented to relax her vigilant watch and seek the repose that even she acknowledged was sadly needed. But sleep had been so long repelled that it refused to come at her call. Her eyes wide open, scenes of the sick room and of her past life were

re-enacted before her, and phantoms, in grotesque procession with unbroken ranks, marched around and around her room. The weariness induced by watching was as nothing to this.

Doctor Winslow had little encouragement to give. "Just what I expected," he said. "Nature is patient, but when we abuse her beyond endurance she will have her revenge, but we must hope for the best," a favourite phrase of his, that "hope for the best."

Every expedient within the knowledge of the old practising physician was resorted to, but all failed to produce the wished result. Brain fever set in, and almost before Agnes had time to realise the blessing of her father's amendment, the shaft of death had descended; the faithful wife, the loving mother lay cold and still.

It was indeed "as one mourneth for his mother" that Agnes mourned the departure of her who had been more than a parent, having lost her own mother when in baby unconsciousness of the treasure the relentless destroyer was snatching from her. While still little removed from babyhood, having been cherished and caressed by the new mother, she had early learned to love her with a deep affection. As she grew older and became cognizant of the incessant care, self-denial, and patience the best of children in their helplessness and inexperience require of mothers, she knew that if great praise is due to her who trains well her own offspring, far higher honour, deeper

gratitude should be accorded her who devoted her best powers to those who are not "bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh."

On Mr. Wadsworth the blow fell with crushing force. At times he was ready to exclaim, "Would I could have died for her." When he thought of the open grave on whose borders he had so closely verged, it was not to recoil with horror. Death had no terrors for him; all beyond was bright and hopeful. The risen Saviour had gone before. Still, now more than ever was he bound to life. How could he leave his sons needing a father's guiding, controlling hand? his daughter, inexperienced in the tortuous ways of a selfish world?

CHAPTER VIII.

RESIGNATION.

THERE were other causes besides grief for the loss of his wife that retarded Mr. Wadsworth's recovery. The fever had left him with a racking cough, and the consciousness that his business affairs needed his oversight, kept his mind in a restless state far from favourable to health of body. Always a cheerful, self-reliant worker, he had chosen to be his own clerk, and had seldom mentioned business in his family. Before he was able to go downstairs, at his *request*, some of his books and papers had been trans-

ferred to his room. Doctor Winslow found him one morning, weary and depressed, poring over accounts, and remonstrated with as much warmth as the self-contained doctor ever allowed himself to display.

"This will never do, distracting your brain over stocks and shares, dividends and rents. Your business now is to get well. I leave you with orders to take your ease, to read very little, to see a friend once in a while, if he will do the talking, to sleep all you can, and to enjoy all the dainties that your good daughter brings you, and I come back and find you worrying yourself over accounts that you ought not to think of for a month yet."

"But, doctor" —

"But me no buts. Take all these away, Miss Agnes, and don't let me see them again till I give the word."

"But, doctor," remonstrated the convalescent, "I must look after my affairs some, they have been neglected too long already."

"Get some one to look after them for you."

"Who must look after the said some one, a stranger? Am I to do it in my present state? Impossible."

Doctor Winslow sat silent a few moments, then said, "I see you do not intend to obey my orders. If you were not an old friend I should be tempted to exercise the liberty every physician thinks he should have when the patient is refractory, the liberty of taking his hat. But suppose we compromise. I will give

you one hour a-day for a few days over those obnoxious accounts, just as an experiment. It is a choice of evils, worrying or working. Worry is worse than work sometimes."

"I know it is in my case," returned the patient.

"I am not so sure; but there is one condition, let Miss Agnes help you. You will certainly overdo if left to yourself, and Miss Agnes must be my deputy. Watch that you do not overrun the hour," &c.

"Agnes would not understand. Besides, she has care enough without her father's easing his shoulders by burdening hers."

Agnes opened her lips to speak, but the good doctor raised his finger to stop her, and retorted, "The heaviest care Miss Agnes has just now is her sick father. The best way to relieve her is for her father to get well as soon as possible. The best way to get well is to shirk work and worry as much as possible. Is that good doctrine categorically stated, Miss Agnes?"

"As good as categorical," replied Agnes smiling. "Father does not know how much I could help him; he has never let me try."

"Precisely. The best mathematician in her class. Thetford has often told me so—with a smattering of bookkeeping learned of that same Thetford. Why, Wadsworth, she is a daughter of a thousand, and will make a clerk of a thousand. Come, Miss Agnes, help me pile all these documents out of sight. To-morrow let your father have them just one hour by the clock.

If he wants you to write a letter or so afterwards well and good, but," — turning to his patient and tapping his own hat significantly,—"not a word of business out of your mouth after the hour."

"We are piling a pretty heavy load on these young shoulders; I shall have another patient still on my hands if I don't take care. We must see what we can do," thought Doctor Winslow, as he gathered up his reins. He went his rounds, looked upon sufferers writhing in pain whom he was powerless to relieve, but to whom, by his mere presence, he imparted strength to endure; listened to tales of ill, gazed on through magnifying lenses, and turned away sad that he could do so little to help those who would not help themselves; brought tears to the parched eyeballs of the stricken mourner by words of comfort and resignation; crimson to the cheek of the transgressor by unsparing rebuke.

The names on the visiting-list for the day were all disposed of, still there was more to be made, and the doctor stopped at Mr. Banister's gate. Bessie, too impatient to wait the regular routine of ringing bell and answering servant, met him at the door. "Why, doctor, there is no one sick here; we didn't send for you."

"You didn't! Well, this *is* a salutation to give a cold, tired man, who has come half a mile out of his way. Do you always send for all your five hundred particular friends when they come to see you?"

"No; but they're not all dreadfully busy driving round from morning, noon, and night with 'cold pison' and horrid knives stowed away under their carriage cushions."

"Better be careful not to make such a terrible fellow cross. You may be glad to have him give you some of his 'cold pison,' if you do look the picture of health now, Miss," said Doctor Winslow, shaking his finger at the rosy-cheeked Bessie. "However, we'll talk about that some other time. It seems to me, Miss Bessie, that there is one of your friends you have not seen any too often lately."

"Queer he should trouble himself about my friends," thought Bessie; and Bessie generally said what she thought, as she did in this instance.

"You won't have many falsehoods to answer for," retorted the doctor laughing. "How long since you saw Miss Agnes Wadsworth?"

"Poor Aggie!" said Bessie. "I haven't been there very often lately; but I thought she wouldn't care to see me. I wouldn't have her think I neglected her for anything. Did she say so?"

"No, she said nothing about you or any of her other friends. I don't know that she particularly wants to see you; in fact, I don't think she does, but I want she should."

"What a man you are to talk riddles. I don't understand you."

"Plain enough, Miss Bessie. When people are in

trouble, and have a good deal on their minds, they are likely to shut themselves up with their troubles and cares, and are only too thankful to their friends if they will leave them alone. Not very complimentary to their friends; but it's a poor friend, a friend not worth having, who can't stand that test. It is not well to leave a person, especially a young person, too long to sad thoughts. I want you to call upon Miss Agnes often; ask her to ride, to walk with you. Don't mind if she says no the first time; go again. Talk to her of what is going on around, of what used to interest her. You know better how to talk to her than I can tell you. You see I don't want the trouble of carrying her through a fit of sickness; and I don't like to see any one moping round, an invalid for life, for want of a little care in youth. Understand now, Miss Bessie."

"Perfectly. I ought to have thought of it myself. I will do my best."

"The best can do no better," replied the doctor.

With Bessie to promise was to perform, and not many hours elapsed before she was *vis a vis* with Bridget, giving her a message: "Ask Miss Wadsworth if she will ride with me this afternoon." Bessie hated an approach to a manœuvre, but now she sent up her message, thinking that if it was given in Mr. Wadsworth's hearing he would be an efficient ally in the small plot between the provident doctor and herself, and she judged rightly. Agnes, if left to her

own inclinations, would have refused Bessie's invitation, and passed another afternoon as she had preceding ones in a house from which the shadow of a recent sorrow had not departed; where every object reminded her of her loss, and where, too, she was surrounded by the adjuncts of sickness; but her father forestalled her answer. "Yes, Bridget, tell Miss Banister Miss Agnes will go;" and he overruled all objections.

It was like awaking out of a long troubled sleep. The rapid motion, the clear, crisp air, and the far-stretching wintry landscape, the tidings of the little world in which she had moved, but from which she had long been absent—for though the calendar registered by weeks the time since the Sunday in January when her father was taken sick, to her it was like years, so full had each day been of "labour and sorrow."

On her return Agnes found Doctor Anstace sitting with her father. "You have not missed me, father. You have had better company than I should have been; it is well I went."

"Hardly better company, Miss Agnes," said the minister, "but I have done something towards making your place good, I hope. May I say that I think it *is* well you went with Miss Bessie. When a great trouble overtakes us, our impulse is to withdraw from the world and shut ourselves up with our grief; but *that is* not, I believe, the wise or the Christian course.

It is not the course, I am sure, that is pleasing to the friends for whom we grieve, if they are cognisant of our actions. They have entered into their rest and we into their labours. They have laid down their work; it is for us to take it up. When I meet a sable-clad mourner walking this world of ours with heavy steps, eyes bent upon the earth, one who avoids all old associations and interests, refuses to be comforted, and makes daily pilgrimages to the spot where lies the mere clay; when I see such an one I would gladly ask him, 'If you meet your friend in the spirit-land, and he inquires of you for the tasks he left unfinished when he went to his long rest, what will you answer? Will you be content to say, Grief unmanned me. I was the centre of all miseries! What could I do but sit me down and sigh?'

"It is not by bending over graves; by thinking of our loss, however great it may be, that we most honour the memory of our departed ones who have fallen asleep in Jesus. It is of their lives that I like to think. Active, helpful here, bright and blissful above. I would, if I could, banish all sepulchral tokens from every house. I would preserve no funeral wreaths, crosses, flowers, to constantly recall the time when heart was wrenched from heart. Or, if I did preserve any reminder, it should be a single bud or spray, to be placed in some guarded nook, to be taken out at rare intervals, when no human eye was upon me. I would have all honour paid the earthly remains of my

friend. I would care for the casket that contained the jewel; but that done, I would perpetuate not his death, but his life, his influence, his fragrant memory. You may think it strange that I say this to you, and just now, but I think the most clear-headed, the most single-hearted of us are apt to feel that we do not honour the memory of the departed if we cheerily go on with life's duties and accept its comforts."

"The doctor is right," said Mr. Wadsworth, when the clergyman had taken his leave. "We have yielded too much to the gloom that we could not at first resist. We must not check the boys if they are more cheerful than we. Even Brownie's laugh has grated on my ear. It is not strange that their spirits should be more elastic than mine. A kind Providence has wisely ordered that the young should soon become reconciled to the absence of the nearest and dearest. What a charnel-house this world would be if it were not so! Agnes, we must keep the hearthstone warm. We must not have our boys think of home as a place that all joy and comfort has deserted. We have lost much, but much remains."

Agnes' life was a very busy one; though the affairs that claimed her time and attention were many of them not those that she would have chosen, they were clearly the duties that Providence had assigned her. Even Miss Carlisle acknowledged that she was in the right path, and ceased to disparage household employments for a woman of talents.

These employments were so interwoven with her best affections that they became a source of happiness, and she watched over her brothers, dealt with tradesmen, held her daily conference with Apphia, gave Bridget her oft-repeated lesson in neatness, order, and in the most petty details, with a sense that all was consecrated work.

If she was ever tempted to impatience, it was on account of Bridget's shortcomings. The young mistress' eye could not be always on the unfaithful servant; and Bridget's motto was, "What the eye ain't afther seein', the heart ain't afther feelin'," a motto which she interpreted with great liberality. Apphia's motherly feeling for the infant she had dandled on her knee, the child whose first toddling footsteps she had guided, who had now reached woman's responsibilities, made her less tolerant of Bridget's failings than if she alone had suffered from them, and they were often placed before the delinquent in clear and emphatic terms; but this increased rather than remedied the difficulty. "Now you do know better than that!" Apphia exclaimed, when some unusually annoying, labour-saving expedient of the indolent Hibernian had excited the disgust of the thrifty Yankee. "You do know better than that. I've heard Miss Agnes tell you twenty times about it. I should be ashamed of myself if I couldn't be trusted five minutes out of sight."

"It's mindin' yer own bizness ye'd betther be, an'

kape a civil tongue in yer head when yer' talkin' to yer betthers."

"My betters! my betters! it'll do to talk about betters where there's lords and ladies, and kings and queens. I've always done the work the Lord set me to do, and done it just as well as I could too; them's the betters in this country, the folks that do their work well; and them that don't are the worsers." Ah! blissful ignorance of the mysteries of American aristocracy.

"Sure an' I've done me work as well as I can, an' it ain't for the like's of ye's to take me to tashk."

Apphia deigned no reply; she resolved to seek the remedy in another direction. Agnes should be relieved of this vexation, if relief was to be had.

That evening the small bottle that served Apphia for an inkstand was brought out from its place in the kitchen closet, a stout steel pen that had done duty before, and a half-quire of good, serviceable, ruled paper were placed upon the table. Apphia was about to write a letter, a formidable job for her. A dinner party for a company of ten, and served in courses, was as nothing to it; but formidable as the task was, once in three months she boldly faced it, and her friends at home knew to a day when they should receive one of her missives. No man or woman ever detected her in putting off a disagreeable piece of work.

Her letters invariably commenced with the kindly formula that always excited a smile, if we chance to

see it prefacing a rustic epistle. "I write these lines to inform you that I am in good health, and hope you are enjoying the same blessing." That piece of composition was always on hand, and required no cudgeling of the brains; it gave a good start to after words, the real subject matter, which was this evening, whether Jane, Apphia's niece, would like to assume the duties of second girl in Mr. Wadsworth's family. There would be work a plenty for her to do; she wouldn't be wanted if there wasn't, but the pay was good and the treatment first-rate. Nothing had been said to Miss Agnes, it wasn't worth while to do that till Jane said whether she wanted to come or not, but she would be willing to change a wooden-headed Irish girl for a Yankee with brains. Would Jane say yes or no at once; if she said yes, her aunt would write again in a few days.

The answer came in Jane's stiff, legible hand. She had thought the matter over, and concluded she couldn't do better than to come; some of the neighbours would think she was letting herself down, working in anybody's house but her father's; but she didn't think she should let her pride stand in the way of her getting an honest living. There was no chance of her having a school before next summer, and she might not then; there were several wanted the school in their district.

Apphia showed the letter to Agnes. "That's just come from Jane, my niecc. You've heard me tell

about her, I dare say. I dropped her a line, asking her if she wanted to come and live here, and that's what she says. She's honest, of course. She wouldn't be a Hopkins if she wasn't. She's smart in her way; she ain't much used to our kind of work, but 'twon't begin to be the trouble to learn her it is to run after Bridget, and you'll know what she will do, and what she won't. That's the most I'll say about Jane. If you want her to come and see how she'll get along, why, speak the word, and I'll drop her another line. If you don't, there's no harm done."

Apphia was remarkably non-committal for her, but "'tain't no use," she said to herself, "making your folks out great things; then maybe they don't make out as much as people expect 'em to."

Jane Hopkins was duly installed in the office of "second girl," vice Bridget O'Flynn removed. Jane had already taught school two summers, and evidently thought it a condescension to serve while others sat at meat. She had confidence in her disciplinary abilities, and was at first inclined to display them to the annoyance of Rufus and Stanley, and to prevent her conversational powers rusting by using them when she waited at table, and to say "haow" when her ears did not do their duty. But she did not lack intelligence and common sense, and soon learned to eliminate the first letter of the alphabet from her pet interrogative, and to confine her expressions of opinion to acceptable times and places. Above all, she was

perfectly trustworthy, and speedily gained the confidence and goodwill of Brownie, whom Agnes had been obliged to leave to Bridget's doubtful care far more than she had wished.

CHAPTER IX.

REST.

THE state of her father's health was the drawback on Agnes' happiness. The obstinate cough still clung to him, and in many ways she could see that he was far from being the robust, vigorous man he had been. Exercise that he had formerly enjoyed was burdensome, and some matters that he had always taken upon himself without a thought of fatigue were assigned to stronger hands.

Agnes had become his clerk at Doctor Winslow's suggestion, and it was now that she realised as she had never done before the benefits of her thorough education. She had valued the information that she had acquired on its own account, but now she knew that, while she had been furnishing her mind, she had also been imparting to it a discipline that could have been attained in no other way. However multiform had been her duties during the early morning hours, she could leave all thoughts of them outside the office door, and with an undivided attention listen to her father's explanations, write his

letters, and balance his accounts—do for him, in fact, what no stranger could have done.

As the summer approached, Doctor Winslow suggested a change of air and scene. Mr. Wadsworth replied, that he was thinking of going to see Emmeline for a week.

“That might do as far as it goes,” said the doctor, “but it does not go far enough, long enough, or high enough. I want you to go where you will have clear, bracing, mountain air, and stay a month at least.”

Mr. Wadsworth was little inclined to leave the comforts of home, and go among strangers, and the subject was dropped, to be brought up again by Mrs. Buffum; who, meeting Agnes one day in June, abruptly accosted her with, “Come, my dear, why can’t you go with us? The professor and I are going to the White Mountains to jog around in that region five or six weeks. It would do your father worlds of good to go, and you too.”

“What are your plans?” Agnes asked.

“Oh, we haven’t got much plan. You know the professor is writing a book on the undergroundiveness, as I call it, of the New England States. Some of it has been printed in the Proceedings of some society or other; and Professor Condit says my husband has made a mistake about the stratification, I believe it is, in the White Mountain region. That don’t suit my professor at all. He’s been all over the ground,

and says he's sure he's right; but he thinks he'd like to go over it again, and take a young man with him, and survey some more. Sydney Carlisle has agreed to go with him. You know he lectured last winter, and my husband was very much pleased with him. I thought it would be a nice plan to make up a party and go too. I asked Miss Carlisle; she and I never got on very well together, but I thought she would like to go if her brother did."

"Will she go?"

"She said she would go if she could. When I told her I was going to invite you, she said she *would* manage to go if you did."

When Agnes spoke to her father of Mrs. Buffum's proposal, he said that he had just received a letter from Mr. Carver, who wished him to spend Commencement Week at Alderton, and wrote that Emmeline was very desirous that her sister should come also, for she had invited Miss Carlisle, whose brother was one of the graduating class, to be her guest. It was arranged that Mr. Wadsworth and Agnes should go to Alderton the week before Commencement; that Miss Carlisle should join them there, and the whole party meet on Commencement Day.

We will not dilate upon the Commencement exercises; doubtless many of our readers have been present upon similar occasions. It is in but one of the forty young men who were to part from their *Alma Mater* that day that we are particularly inter-

ested. A poor man's son, who had striven against obstacles such as poverty alone can put in the way of the earnest student, had outstripped rich men's sons, whose road to learning had been smoothed by all the means that wealth could command. Agnes sympathised heartily in the pride and gratification of her friend; for hope prompted her to look forward to the time when she might see one of her own brothers bear off the honours of such a day, and receive the encomiums of men of mark,—men who would leave "footprints on the sands of time."

The travelling party were on their way the next morning. As the journey had for its object recreation, quite as much as scientific research, they stopped and moved on as their fancy prompted. Sometimes Mr. Wadsworth and the ladies would remain at a comfortable halting-place, while Professor Buffum and Sydney made excursions of two or three days. Whenever the excursions were to be for one day only, Mrs. Buffum and Miss Carlisle joined the explorers, and scaled many a height, before rated inaccessible to the foot of woman. That they were of assistance to the husband and brother we would not venture to assert, but those scrambles "over bush, bank, and scaur," were well calculated to delight the heart of any votary of St. Crispin. Professor Buffum declared that his wife had left her trail, marked by dilapidated boots, all over New Hampshire.

Whether these days were profitable and agreeable

to the more active members of the party or no, they were days that Agnes ever after looked back upon with pleasure ; days spent with her father, reading, talking, dreaming in the shadow of some wayside inn, or upon the piazza of a great hotel, watching the waves of travel as they surged and receded, bearing thither and away the toiling pleasure-seekers.

Though the busy worker in the vineyard may be glad at times to know how sweet it is to do nothing, the call to renewed diligence soon wakes him from his day-dreams. Professor Buffum had obtained all the confirmation he thought his theory needed, and was impatient to be in his study again. Sydney Carlisle was to help him write out the notes of their excursions. Miss Carlisle must return to her post in the seminary. Mr. Wadsworth and Agnes, though they had often received the tidings "All is well," felt that they too ought not to prolong their absence.

The father returned to his home with bronzed cheeks and augmented strength, but the rasping winds of autumn brought on a recurrence of the cough and other discouraging symptoms. Gradually, in talking with Agnes, his tone became one of advice. He spoke of his pecuniary affairs as he might have done had he been about to start on a long journey, intending to leave his business in the hands of a trusted agent. He spoke of each of his sons, their different temperaments, of the educations that he wished each to have, and of the extent to which their natural bent

and inclinations should be consulted. He often charged Agnes to make home as attractive as possible by innocent recreation, and to encourage her brothers to bring their associates to the house, and thus influence them to choose friends whom they would not be ashamed of at home or abroad. These counsels were given casually as time and circumstances suggested them. Agnes listened to them, treasured them up in her heart, and often in later life they guided and strengthened her.

Slowly, stealthily the insidious disease progressed, now relaxing its hold, giving the inexperienced space for hope; again tightening its grasp and dashing all hope in the dust.

There came a morning when Mr. Wadsworth was unable to leave his room. No need, then, of the cautious practitioner to break in sympathising words the sad truth to the stricken family. They instinctively felt that the generous parent would never again sit at the family board, that the tongue of the faithful counsellor and guide would soon be silent.

Kind reader, bear with a few lines in the first person. Not many months since we were about to leave the seashore retreat, where we had spent months away from the din of city life. The day had been dark and stormy; now the clouds had poured down rain; again the thick fog had shut out the boundless ocean view, and even the dwellings whose doors had stood open in the freedom of summer hospitality. We had

bade adieu to friends whom we should meet in busier scenes. The rooms were dismantled, and we waited the coming of the coach that would bear us to the city-bound train. We waited, standing at the window looking westward from whence we had often gazed at the gorgeous tints of the sunset glow. Murky clouds hung thick and heavy, hiding the blue above; suddenly they parted, the light broke through, and the sun appeared behind "the silver lining," then the brooding clouds closed, and the sky was all gray and sombre again.

Though the clouds of bereavement hung heavy over the Wadsworth mansion, one bright spot was there. The children came and went in the sick-room, leaving the gloom behind them as they crossed the threshold. How could that place be gloomy when the Sun of Righteousness shone in all his splendour? The physician stood beside the couch of pain and lassitude, and bowed his head in reverent joy; a greater Physician had been there, even the healer of sin-sick souls. The pastor looked in glad amazement on the departing disciple, and learned of him, for he had "been with Jesus." Friends came in and went away with radiant countenances, saying, "surely 'this is the very gate of heaven.'"

"Now, while" he "was thus drawing toward the gate, behold a company of the heavenly host came out to meet" him; "to whom it was said by the two shining ones, This is the man that has loved our Lord

when" he "was in the world, and that has left all for his holy name; and he hath sent us to fetch" him, "and we have brought" him "thus far on his desired journey, that" he "may go in and look his Redeemer in the face with joy."

Folded up with Mr. Wadsworth's last will was found a letter to his children, in which he addressed each one. Melville he counselled not to be in haste to be rich, and if he should acquire wealth, to regard it and use it as a God-bestowed gift. Rufus he advised to cultivate industry and steadiness of purpose, and should his taste lead him in that direction when he came to decide upon his calling, to allow no pride of position to deter him from mechanical pursuits, for to skilful mechanics the world owed a great portion of its progress. Stanley he wished to go through a college course; then he would be prepared to appreciate and enjoy foreign travel, and afterwards to choose his profession. "Brownie, dear little Brownie," it was impossible to tell how he was to be useful in the world, but he must love his sister; she would do for him what his father and mother would have done had they stayed with him; he must be careful not to grieve her; and his heavenly Father would show him how to be a good and perhaps a great man. Agnes he commended to the brotherly care of each and all his sons; they would not forget that she was their only home-sister, and would each be her true knight.

There was little to add to what he had already said

to his daughter. She knew what his wishes were, but he would not have the advice he had given regarded as commands; it was impossible for him to foresee many circumstances that might arise, but he trusted his children to follow the general tenor of his counsels. He solemnly adjured them to hold fast to their Bible and the religion that had sustained their parents at all times, and not to let go either till they had found substitutes that would be better guides in life, stronger supports in death.

It was but a little more than two years since Agnes Wadsworth, having completed her school education, saw life before her,—a life in which better fitted hands and brains than hers would bear the labour and responsibility, and she would be left to pursue her own course. Hers was not to be the life of an idle dreamer or a flitting butterfly, but it was to be an industrious life, in which intellect should have its full scope, and for which the world might be better. Now how all was changed. The course that she had marked out for herself she had turned her back upon at the stern command of duty. The better fitted hands and brains were working in other spheres of action, or were at rest, and she stood face to face with responsibilities graver far than falls to the lot of most women. Would she discharge them well? She could not tell. She could only go on day by day, believing that as was her day, so would be her strength, and leave results to God.

CHAPTER X.

IN WHICH WE HEAR FROM SOME MEMBERS OF THE
EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS SOCIETY.

"WHAT's that Carlisle prowling round here all the time for?" growled Melville Wadsworth.

"Why shouldn't he come if he wants to?" asked Rufus. "He's a clever fellow, ain't he?"

"Too clever by half, I think," answered the eldest brother.

"I think he's a good fellow," said Stanley. "He knows lots about the California mines, and all that sort of thing, and this is a capital book he lent me."

"Yes, and he lent me one that tells all about Whitney's cotton-gin, and about the man that got up the machinery they make the French muslins on, and about the power-looms, and he explained them all to me, so I understood them first-rate," said Rufus. "I'm going to get up a machine some day that will astonish everybody."

"You'll blunder on it, if you do," said Melville.

"What makes you so crusty, Mell?" Stanley asked.

"I ain't crusty, but you fellows are stupid if you don't see what Carlisle is coming here for with his books, and his mines, and his machines."

"Why, he's coming here because he likes to, I suppose."

"Yes, and Carver used to like to come here; and some day he'll swoop down and carry Agnes off, just as Carver did Emmeline."

"Whe-e-ew!" whistled Rufus. "I never thought of that."

"You don't see it, but it's right under your nose. That meddling old matchmaker, Mrs. Buffum, is putting him up to it."

"I declare, so she is! I heard her telling Ag. only yesterday what a promising young man he is, how much the professor thought of him, and how he was going to get some splendid appointment, and be the biggest of the big-wigs some day, and what a good-hearted man he was,—kind to his mother and sisters, and so forth"——

"Yes," interrupted Melville, "when you hear an old woman telling a young one about a man's heart, and what a capital son and brother he is, you may be sure there is a matrimonial trap already to snap."

"I wonder how you came to be so sharp-scented for matrimonial traps, old rat," said Rufus. "Anyway, I say Carlisle's a good fellow, and Aggie might go farther and fare worse. If he continues to merit my confidence, I think I shall give him my vote, as Squire Wakefield says."

"I shan't. I don't relish the idea of playing

second fiddle to any clever fellow of a brother-in-law, or being left out in the cold."

"You are a selfish fellow!" exclaimed Rufus.

"I don't see any need of our being left out in the cold," said Stanley. "Father gave Aggie her share of the money, and mother's too, to be sure, but we've got enough: besides, I can make money for myself by-and-by."

"It ain't the money I'm talking about. Who wants to stay here with nobody but Apphia and Jane."

"You always was a good fellow to look out for number one," said Rufus; "but I say it's neither here nor there, our being left out in the cold. Carlisle's a splendid, clever fellow. If he's taken a fancy to our Aggie, he shows he's a gentleman and a scholar. If Aggie takes a fancy to him, she's a right to marry him. I don't believe when either of us take a fancy to a handsome young lady we shall trouble ourselves whether Aggie is left out in the cold or not; and, what's more, Mell will be straggling off himself before long. He won't mind whether Ag. likes it or not."

"I shan't always stay here in the chimney-corner. I'm going to make my own way in the world. You'll see me a rich man some day. Ag.'s got money enough for any woman. Women don't want so much money as men; but there's no need of Ag.'s getting Syd. Carlisle to help spend her cash. Anyhow, it

makes me mad to hear the fellow say he's looking after her cash."

"I don't like the idea of having Aggie carried off," said Stanley. "Jake Ormond said his sister heard the other day they were engaged, and he asked me if they were. I told him it was no such thing."

"Asked if who were engaged, Stanley?" said Agnes, coming in at that moment.

Stanley hesitated.

"You and Sydney Carlisle. Are you, Ag?" Rufus demanded.

"What nonsense, Ruffie. I never thought of such a thing."

Agnes had never thought of such a thing; but the gossips, who scent an engagement and marriage in the interchange of the most common civilities, had coupled her name with Sydney Carlisle's. Silly female gossips they might be, but mischievous and annoying for all that. Her acquaintance with Sydney had been pleasant to her and profitable to her brothers. Her mind had been so engrossed since her father's departure to the spirit-land that it had never occurred to her that the young man's frequent visits could be construed to mean anything more than friendliness. Her intimate acquaintance with his sister, his no less intimate acquaintance with Mr. Carver, and their six-weeks' journey, had placed them upon a footing about as unreserved as that of members of one household.

It was to her the most natural thing in the world

that, after her father's death, he should call frequently to show an unusually fine specimen he had secured the previous summer, or on some later excursion,—to bring a book or a plate to elucidate a subject that had been discussed with the boys. She lived over her old school-life as she joined in Sydney's conversation with her brothers, and she welcomed his influence over them. Why need the gossips meddle? "Had they so much leisure from their own business that they could take care of other people's that did not belong to them?"

However that might be, they had meddled, and she could no longer be blind to the fact that she was giving Sydney encouragement to merge the friend in the lover. There was nothing of the coquette in Agnes' disposition. She had no understanding of the nature that could, with mocking eye and jesting tongue, spurn the prostrate lover, or gloat over the tortures of a manly heart. It should not be justly charged upon her that she had inspired affection only to crush it.

Mrs. Buffum was not the only one who had sounded Sydney's praises in her ears. She had often heard that he was a young man who bade fair to stand high in the scientific world; one in whose tastes and chosen pursuits she could fully sympathise; whose qualities of mind and soul were well calculated to gain and hold the love of any woman who looked below the *froth* of show and glitter.

Such were Agnes' thoughts as she sat at the sitting-room window, oblivious of the boys' noise. She was so accustomed to the sound of their voices that it did not disturb her, but a peal of the door-bell did. Melville began to replace the table-cloth that he had deranged with a friendly scuffle with Rufus, and Stanley to pick up bows, arrows, balls, and sundry other boyish equipments.

"What are you making such a fuss for?" said Rufus; "there's nobody coming in here."

"Yes, there is," said Melville. "It's Carlisle. I saw him go by."

For the first time Sydney Carlisle was to Agnes an unwelcome visitant. Just now she could not see him. She rose hastily and left the room.

While the young man had been the subject of comment and discussion at the Wadsworth mansion, he had been a passenger in a train from a neighbouring city. He held in his hand a recently published work that completely took up his attention, until familiar names, mentioned by the occupants of the seat behind him, drove all idea of the page he was gazing upon from his mind; and whether he would or no, he was obliged to hear the remarks of his fellow-passengers, who did not recognise him, though he gave them ample opportunity to see his face. They were women, who discussed the affairs of others with as much freedom of voice and style in a public conveyance as they would have used in their own parlours.

"Yes, Agnes Wadsworth is very smart. She settled her father's estate herself. Mr. Carver was put on executor, but he didn't do much."

"No; since he's moved into the city he don't have much time, I suppose."

"It wasn't that so much; but he said Agnes knew a great deal more about her father's business than he did."

"I dare say she did. Anybody might have known Mr. Carver was too smart a man to stay in that little country town. I always told my husband some city church would find him out."

"They say the Alderton people hated to part with Emmeline full as much as they did with Mr. Carver."

"O Emmeline Wadsworth will make her way anywhere, and so will Agnes. I'm told the property is turning out first-rate in her hands."

"She's pretty shrewd, I fancy. I heard my husband laughing about the way Mr. Brooker tried to get ahead of her."

"How was that?"

"There were a hundred shares of some manufacturing stock that was way down when Mr. Wadsworth died six months ago, but he had a good deal of faith in it, and told Agnes so. Some people got frightened and sold out; but Brooker was behind the scenes, and picked up all the shares he could. He went to Agnes so friendly and smooth, and told her he used to do business for her father, and he thought he would

come and tell her that some of the best brokers were advising their customers to sell while they could get anything; that he should be sorry to have her lose, and if she would like to have him, he would sell her shares, and put the money where it would bring her in something."

"Disinterested man! to be willing to take stock that wasn't a-going to be worth anything."

"Well, he said he could make himself good. Men had a good many ways of turning property that women did not know anything about."

"I don't doubt it."

"Mr. Carver advised Agnes to sell; so did a good many others. She didn't want to go against everybody, so she asked Mr. Brooker to name a price. He offered less than the market price; but Agnes knew what he ought to give, and told him, up and down, she wouldn't sell at all. He got vexed to see such a good chance to make a penny slip through his fingers, and told her he hoped she wouldn't have cause to repent her obstinacy. In a month or so the company paid a dividend, and the stock went right up. My husband says Brooker has had to stand a good many jokes about woman's obstinacy, and Mr. Carver said he wouldn't advise Agnes about business again."

"The Wadsworths are all smart. Agnes is quite an heiress."

"Indeed she is, and just as quick as she begins to

go into company again, there will be flies enough about the honey."

"It will be too late then."

"Why?"

"Oh, that young Carlisle has got the start."

"You don't mean so. Are they engaged?"

"I don't know whether they are now or not. If they ain't, they will be soon. I don't think I should know him myself, but my daughter lives close by, you know, and she says he goes there most every day."

"Oh, well, if that's the case, it'll be a match, of course; but I shouldn't think any young man would want to marry for money."

"No, I shouldn't; but that's a snug berth, and I don't know as you can blame a young man like Carlisle for stepping into it, if he can."

The brakes were hastily applied, the passengers well shaken, the car door was opened, and the conductor shouted, "Dartfield! Dartfield!" The dames gathered up their bundles and made their way out of the car. One of them exclaimed, as she landed on the platform, "I don't know now but that was Carlisle in the seat in front of us."

"I declare I believe it was!" said the other. "Do you suppose he heard us?"

"Oh, no. He couldn't, the cars made such a noise."

"Slip into a comfortable berth! indeed! Marry for money!!" thought the individual whose motives

had been so freely canvassed, as he tucked his book under his arm, and strode off in the direction of his boarding place. When he stepped into the car he had intended to go from the station to Agnes' house, and with the aid of the illustrations in the new volume complete a description of a recently-invented mining process that he had tried to make clear to Melville and Stanley the night before.

But while on the road he had appeared to himself in a new character, or rather he had learned that in the eyes of others he sustained the character of a fortune-hunter, a character at which his whole soul revolted. Indignant at the imputation, he walked rapidly on a few minutes, then turned on his heel and went as rapidly in the opposite direction, saying to himself, "Poh! what a fool I am to mind those old women's twaddle. I know I am not fortune-hunting. I can make my own fortune, and before long I shall have a home and a position to offer a wife; till then it is nobody's business but Agnes' and mine whether I am in pursuit of her fortune or not. I will go and show the boys the book, as I meant to do."

He saw Agnes at the window, but found only her brothers in the sitting-room. They received him not in their usual frank, cordial way, but with the restraint that generally greets the coming of a person who has just been criticised. The restraint disappeared when the book was opened, and the four heads were bending over the plates. Sydney would have been dull

indeed had he not suspected that Agnes wished to avoid seeing him, and as if to leave no room for doubt, Brown came in and asked for his sister. "Where is she, sure enough?" said Rufus. "She was here a minute ago. Look round, old fellow, and you'll find her."

"Here she is, sure 'nough," said Brown, opening the parlour door and running to her. "Aggie, Mr. Carlisle has got some pictures! Come see, Aggie! come!"

But instead of having Agnes for one of his auditors, Sydney heard the suppressed tones of her voice coaxing the child to another part of the house. The call was shortened, and the caller went away in a state of mind far from pleasant. "Did Agnes also suspect him of being attracted by the chink of money-bags?" The next time he called it happened that Agnes was away from home; but as the boys did not speak of her, his pride prompted him to refrain also from mentioning her name, and he again left, thinking he had been purposely avoided, yet not willing to believe that Agnes looked upon his attentions as those of a speculator in the matrimonial market, yet not sure that she did not so regard them.

Self-respect counselled him to make his visits "few and far between." This did not escape the gossips. They hastened to report that it was all off between Sydney Carlisle and Agnes Wadsworth, and then turned their acute optics elsewhere, in hopes to spy

out some other racy bit of news, and their hopes were not disappointed, for if there was no news quite visible, they could manufacture some from shadows and airy nothings.

But not newsmongers only had watched the growth of the friendship between Agnes and Sydney, and the attention of friends, interested and disinterested, was not so easily diverted. Miss Carlisle was not slow to discover that her brother's visits to the Wadsworth mansion were much less frequent than they had been, but it was in vain that she questioned him; he always answered in praise of Agnes, and would not patiently hear her blamed. Finding herself baffled in that quarter she hoped for better success in another. "Agnes, what is the difficulty between you and Sydney?" the sister asked.

"Difficulty? There is no difficulty that I know of."

"Then what is the reason he has stopped coming here?"

"Didn't it ever occur to you, my dear friend," answered Agnes laughing, "that you may be in danger of falling into the schoolma'amish habit of calling people to account and asking direct questions?"

But Miss Carlisle was a lady not easily daunted. "You can't put me off so," said she, joining in the laugh.

"Your brother was here a few days ago," said Agnes; "there is a model he borrowed for Rufus."

"Did he tell you about the appointment that has been offered him?"

"No."

"That is strange—you saw him, of course?"

"No." Agnes was beginning to lose patience, or she would have added that she had intended seeing Sydney, but that he asked for Rufus, stayed only a few moments, and was gone before she could come downstairs.

"I see you don't intend to let me into your secrets," said Miss Carlisle.

"Really I have no secrets to let you into. Sydney has been kind enough to come and talk with the boys; they enjoy his calls very much."

"The boys are bright, and Sydney always had a fancy for bright boys; but you know, and I know, there is some one else besides the boys he likes to talk with here."

Agnes silently wondered how far Miss Carlisle thought a friend's privilege extended.

"Now, don't be angry, Agnes, but I know that Sydney thinks very highly of you, and I was almost sure you were not quite indifferent to him. You are so exactly suited to each other, it is a pity to let any trifling misunderstanding separate you. If you will tell me just what it is, you may be sure that your maidenly reserve will be safe in my hands."

"I assure you I have nothing to tell."

"I can't be reconciled to this. I was so disappointed

when you had to settle down into a domestic, chimney-corner kind of woman ; then, when I saw how exactly suited you and Sydney were to each other, I thought how delightful it would be for both of you ; he would so fully appreciate you, and you would be such a companion for him in his work and study. Why, Agnes, I thought you would be a help exactly meet for him."

The picture was an attractive one as Miss Carlisle sketched it, and as imagination added the tints ; but Agnes answered : " I should think it strange if you did not love your brother, and were not proud of him, and I am sure that the lady who will call him husband will have good reason to love him and be proud of him too, but once for all, let me ask you to give up the idea that I shall ever be that lady."

" Well, well, I see it is of no use to talk to you now, but by-and-by, if I can do anything to make all right between you, I will with all my heart." And notwithstanding Agnes' disclaimers, the would-be peacemaker departed, still of the opinion that offence had been given and taken. Miss Carlisle, who was not good at concealment, inadvertently dropped hints that she had taken upon herself the office of conciliator. Her brother quietly but decidedly requested her to desist from further interference ; and thinking that Agnes would take the well-meant attempt as another proof of mercenary motives, saw less frequently

than ever the young lady whom he was conscious he should soon have learned to love.

Apphia and Jane, too, constructed a romance out of the reports that the latter brought from sitting-room and library, and to which the former listened with much interest. The younger woman had been the first to suggest the idea that tender sentiments were the cause of the young scientist's frequent calls. Lynx-eyed for tender sentiments was Jane, for did she not entertain them herself, and were they not reciprocated by Alpheus Byfield, who was working hard on his father's farm summers and studying hard winters? Jane's sympathies in this case had caused her to imagine she saw more than there really was to be seen, and it was fully settled between aunt and niece in their confidential communications that "Mr. Carlisle liked Miss Agnes," and "*vice versa*" (a phrase Jane often used), that "Miss Agnes liked Mr. Carlisle, and it would be a match; why shouldn't it?"

Jane had wondered what the wedding-dress would be. "White-watered silk, if she was Miss Agnes;" and Apphia had once and again minutely described Emmeline's wedding, and was already mentally arranging the details of Agnes' nuptials, when, presto! Jane came down and reported that Mr. Carlisle was in the sitting-room with the boys, and when Miss Agnes knew he was coming she went into the parlour and *didn't* offer to go in and see him. "I guess they *have* quarrelled," Jane added. "But they'll get over

it; lovers often have their tiffs." The second girl spoke from experience, for Alpheus Byfield and Jane Hopkins each had a strong will. But Jane was soon obliged to acknowledge that there was more than a "tiff" between Agnes and Sydney; or they were more set than the parties whose differences she had taken a part in; or again, that they did not like each other as well as she had thought. After mature consideration she leaned to the latter belief, and shaking her head mournfully, stated to Apphia she was pretty certain there wouldn't be a wedding in that house right away. Apphia poh-pohed the opinion, and declared her intention of going to headquarters for information. "Don't tell her I said anything about it," Jane besought.

"Never you fear. I know what I am about," was the reply.

Agnes was in "the office" the next morning. The room was furnished and arranged as it had been during her father's lifetime, and she sat at the desk looking over papers when Apphia appeared. Agnes was not surprised to see her, for she often came there to consult her young mistress. "She came then," she said, "to tell Miss Agnes that Mr. Bovine, the butcher, wanted to know if he should bring his bill to-morrow, as he had to make up some money the next day; and Mr. Saccharine, the grocer, left word that he had received some uncommonly fine figs and oranges, and wanted to know if Miss Agnes would like to have him

bring some." Apphia was no "wire-puller," and her honest face betrayed a concern deeper than the outstanding notes of Mr. Bovine, or the day-book of Mr. Saccharine were likely to inspire. The faithful woman lingered. Agnes looked up from her papers and asked, "What else, Apphia?"

"Mr. Carlisle ain't been here lately."

"He was here last week, was he not?"

"He don't come so often as he used to."

"Not quite, I think."

"He's a pretty young man."

"He is a very fine young man."

"He'd make a woman a good husband."

"I don't doubt it."

"You haven't had any falling-out, have you?"

"Oh, no."

"I think, speaking in a general way, it's better for a woman to be married."

"You do not preach as you practise, do you, Apphia? It is odd to hear you, one of the most useful and contented of single sisters advocating matrimony."

"I don't see why I shouldn't, Miss Agnes. I've been too busy all my life to get married; not but what I've had chances enough, some of 'em were good, and some of 'em wasn't so good. There was 'Bijah Amblin, he thought I'd be a good hand to come and make butter and cheese to his house, and so he asked me if I would one day when I was at

home. I told him I guessed I wouldn't. He said he guessed I'd better; if I didn't take the chance while 'twas going, maybe I'd be an old maid all my days, and have Miss 'Phia Hopkins, seventy-five, on my gravestone after all. I told him there was a choice of evils, and I guessed I wouldn't take the biggest. I shouldn't told of it, but he said the last time I was at home, he guessed the old girl wished she'd took a husband when she could get him. I wouldn't change places with his wife for no money. Why, I'm a master sight better off than she is. I've had a good home ever since I was twelve years old, and I've got as good a closetful of clothes as any woman need to have. See me going to meetin' in my black silk and good shawl, and her in a cotton de laine, and the shawl she had when she was first married. I don't know where she got the dress, I'm sure. He sells all the butter and eggs, and pockets the money. They say he's as tight as the bark of a tree.

"He ain't so mighty well off either. Why, I guess I could buy him out, and have a pretty plum left too, and not touch what your father give me, for all he ain't spent nothing on his children's schooling; and pinched 'em and his wife, too, every way he knew how, and what he don't know about pinching ain't worth knowing. I do pity that woman."

Agnes laughed heartily, not at the privations of Mrs. 'Bijah Amblin and the little Amblins, but because they were such incongruous instances for an advocate

of matrimony to cite. Apphia stared in puzzled amazement; then, catching the joke, she too laughed heartily. It was some moments before she could continue her reminiscences in this wise—"I had better chances than that. All the men in the world ain't 'Bijah Amblins, but somehow after your own ma died, I felt as if it was something sort of sacred for me to stay and see that you children got along well. Then when your pa was going to marry again, I didn't know how good your new ma would be to you. Stepmothers don't do right always; but folks find fault with 'em pretty often when they're no business to. Anyway, I couldn't see my way clear to go off till I see how you would get along. Then, after I found out what a pious, good woman your second ma was, William was sick, and it seemed as if I ought to stay more than ever; and then after that, your ma, she wan't as strong as she was, and she seemed to need me. So you see, Miss Agnes, I haven't had time to get married, and I dunno but it's just as well. I've always had a good home, and I do think I've been kind of useful, and I've always been with folks I liked, and I guess they liked me."

Apphia's rough, red hand rested on the desk as she stood talking, Agnes laid hers, white and soft, upon it, and the whilom nurse and maid of all work went on—"But it's different with you, Miss Agnes, and I know you won't mind my telling you if you like Mr. Carlisle, and he likes you, you oughten't to be

much put by just because you've got a little affronted."

"I know I haven't a better friend in the world than you, Apphia," said Agnes; "that there is no one more interested for my happiness and welfare than you; but haven't I work for heart and hands here? Father and mother have left me a sacred trust. As I remember what I owe to my second mother, I want to be, as far as I can, a mother to her sons; and as I have remembered how tenderly and patiently father bore with me, and how he exerted himself to make home happy for all his children, I have tried to take up his work where he left it. That was what he expected me to do, I know; how many times he charged me to keep up the home influence."

"I see just what you mean, Miss Agnes; but I don't think your pa meant you shouldn't do anything but look after the boys. 'Twan't his way to make one child give up everything to the others."

"No, I know it was not. I do not spend nearly all my time for the boys. I don't think it a great self-denial to stay here in the dear old home, surrounded by every comfort, and my own mistress, and, as father used to say, keep the hearthstone warm."

"Well, perhaps you're right. I'd be the last one to try to make you do anything against your duty."

"It's not all duty, Apphia. It is a pleasure and duty."

"I hope you won't be disappointed."

"Disappointed?"

"I've known several women that wasn't married because they thought they ought to stay at home and take care of the old folks or the children; and the old folks died, and the children got married and went off, and the woman, she was left a poor, forlorn, lonesome old maid. The young folks didn't seem to think they owed nothing to the one that worked hard for 'em when she might have done a great deal better."

"I am not afraid," said Agnes. "I may be an old maid. The prospect of the title does not alarm me at all; but I don't think I shall be poor, forlorn, or lonesome."

"I don't mean that exactly; but, speaking in a general way, when a woman is an old maid for the sake of other folks she is everybody's pack-horse, and she don't get much thanks for it either. The boys are growing bigger every day, and they'll be going off. It ain't in reason to expect them to stay at home all their days."

"I shouldn't want them to; but I do want them always to have a home,—a father's house with open doors; and it will be some time before Brownie will want to leave home."

"Well, I see it's no use talking, Miss Agnes; your mind is made up. I'd better go look after my dinner."

Agnes' "mind was made up." Her work was before her; she had determined that no new ties should draw her from it; and she was grateful to the prying

gossips who had roused her to realise the position in which she stood before her own happiness or Sydney's was perilled.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SECOND FLIGHT FROM THE HOME NEST.

"WHAT a tall boy you are, Melville. You will soon look over my head," said Agnes as she gazed at her eldest brother, whose form was fast assuming manly proportions.

"Yes, I am going skyward, as Professor Buffum says. I've been thinking, Ag., I shall leave school this fall."

"So soon, Melville? I think father would have chosen to have you go to school one year more at least."

"I don't know about that. I'm going to be a merchant, that's settled. I may just as well go into a store next fall, and be learning the business, as stay at school and learn things that won't help me along in business one bit. I'll go and see Carver about it. I suppose I've got to get him to say yes; but he will say yes to anything you and I want. Heigh-ho! I shall be glad when I'm my own master."

"Mr. Carver is not a very dictatorial guardian."

"Oh no, Carver is well enough in his way; as good for a guardian as any man, I dare say. He hasn't

meddled much ; but then I feel kind of small going and asking him, ' Please, sir, may I go into a store ? ' ”

“ I don't see why you should feel small. You would be very apt to ask his advice if he had no legal right to give it. ”

“ Yes ; but there's a difference between doing a thing because you choose to and because you must. However, the first question I shall be asked when I try to get a place is, Who is my guardian, and has he given his consent ? ”

Melville went to see Mr. Carver, who not only gave his consent, but promised to ask some of the business men of his congregation to interest themselves to secure an eligible place for his brother-in-law. In the course of his inquiries the minister learned that there would soon be a vacancy in the establishment of Mr. Brainerd, a member of his church, and a man who conducted his business on religious principles ; but Melville “ would have to begin at the foot of the ladder, and work his way up, ” Mr. Brainerd said.

Agnes had never forgotten the morning when her father had so gently appealed to her in behalf of home duties ; and she often thought of him as she watched from her window a father and mother robbin tending their young, dropping racy worms into wide-open mouths, and later luring them from the nest to test weak pinions, and with parental watchfulness and care hovering over their offspring to strengthen them for future independence. One morning she saw the

mother-bird flying round and round the nest, chattering now in soft, persuasive tones, then in loud, impatient accents, trying to prevail upon the last weak, timid, or sluggish fledgling to use its own powers ; but it was so much easier to lie in the snug old home, and be fed by fond seniors, that robin had no idea of getting his own living. Then the mother-bird had recourse to decision and judicious severity, and tumbled her indolent or faint-hearted child out of the nest, and it was compelled to spread its wings in its own cause.

As Agnes watched the domestic drama on a small scale, she likened it to that which, sooner or later, might be enacted by those she cared for ; one after another would go from the home hallowed by the memory of father and mother, and where she was striving to keep alive the influence of their love and example. She wished her brothers to become stalwart men, who would not blench in the battle of life ; but she had dreaded the first break in the family, and it had come sooner than she had expected. She could not object to Melville's wish to enter upon his chosen employment, and she was not disposed to controvert his argument that the year in business might be of more service to him hereafter than the year at school ; but she would not have urged him to test his powers in new ways till they had acquired more firmness. It was not, she consoled herself, like having him go to a distance, whence she could hear

only at long intervals; he would be but twelve miles away, would board with Emmeline, and come home every Saturday night.

Melville found his new life a laborious one,—very different from his boy-life in a home where simple, unostentatious comfort had been constantly studied,—but he looked forward for years to something very like this. His father had often described to him the duties of the juniors in a dry goods store, and said that he wished no son of his to “climb in at the cabin windows;” that only by commencing at the rudiments could he acquire a thorough knowledge of a business, and be able in later years to direct others, and judge of their capabilities, trials, and duties. Melville worked cheerfully in the drudgery, anticipating promotion; meanwhile, he spared no pains to acquaint himself with the different fabrics he handled, their raw material, manufacture, and styles.

One day, when a part of the salesmen were gone to dinner, and the remainder were fully occupied, Mr. Brigham, a regular customer, came in, looked about for the young man with whom he was accustomed to trade, and not seeing him, accosted Melville. The boy, glad of his chance to sell his “first bill of goods,” answered with alacrity, and showed so much clear knowledge of the fabrics that he unfolded, that Mr. Brigham, after completing his purchase, stopped at the counting-room and asked who the young clerk *was*.

"The boy, you mean. That is Wadsworth, Melville Wadsworth."

"Oh, son of Melville Wadsworth, who died a year or so since?"

"The same."

"He'll make a smart business man if he keeps on as he has begun. Takes after his father, I should say. I remember him well; he retired with a fortune when comparatively a young man, I think."

"Yes, I think Melville is like his father."

It was not Mr. Brainerd's custom to be very enthusiastic in praise of his employees, for he had learned, he said, that the "Thou shalt not covet," did not extend to boys, salesmen, or bookkeepers in the dry goods trade.

"I want to get a chance in the city for my oldest son," said Mr. Brigham.

"I thought he was with you."

"So he is, and I've got a good run of country trade as any store within twenty miles of me. Warren is well posted up in our business, and knows all the different storekeepers in our region. He would influence a good deal of trade."

"How old is your son?"

"He is just twenty. The fact is, I have made all my calculations that he would go in with me when he was twenty-one,—'Brigham & Son,'—but young men get tired of staying at home sometimes. Warren says he don't care to settle down into a country

dealer; he wants to get in to a bigger business, and, besides, he says his younger brothers are coming on fast enough to take his place. My boys will have to be provided for, one after another, I suppose, and Warren is smart; so, as he's inclined to try making his own way, perhaps it will be just as well for us all round."

"What salary will your son expect?"

"Oh, he won't stand much for salary the first year; just enough to pay his board. He'd consider that the knowledge he got would be worth more than salary. When he gets well posted in your city ways of doing business, it'll be time enough for him to look out for a big salary."

"One of our salesmen will leave the first of January; if your son is disposed to come and make a trial with us, I will give him two hundred dollars for the first year. I should want him to understand, though, that his place will be at first near the foot of the class; those who are with us now are entitled to promotion when a resignation makes way."

"He wouldn't have to take a boy's place, would he?"

"Oh, no; I did not mean that; but his place would be next to Wadsworth's."

"I'll tell Warren of your offer, and I'm pretty sure he will close with it."

In the course of his perambulations about the city, Mr. Brigham asked questions,—here one, there

another,—and ascertained that Mr. Wadsworth had left an unencumbered property sufficient to make the portion of each of his sons a good starting capital for any business in which he might wish to engage; that the interest only could be used during minority, and the principal and accumulated interest, if there was any, was to be paid to each at their majority. Having satisfied himself on these points, and concluded the business that brought him to the metropolis, Mr. Brigham made the best of his way to the station, and reached home just as his eldest son was locking the store-door.

“I concluded you wasn’t coming home to-night,” said Warren.

“I didn’t know as I should fetch it. I’ve been looking after your interests; that’s hindered me some. How’s the fire?”

“It’s all right.”

“I guess we’d better start it up, so we can come back after supper.”

The door was unlocked, the fire replenished, and the two crossed the road and entered a large white house with green blinds. A goodly amount of substantial viands were disposed of, and Mr. Brigham excused himself on the plea of memoranda of purchases to look over, and returned with Warren to the store. There was little to interest in the father’s written notes of the day’s work in the city, or in the son’s account of who had been to the store, what

news they had told, and what they had bought. The conversation that we wish to recall was intermingled with these readings and recitals.

"I guess I've got a chance for you, Warren."

"You've done pretty well. I didn't expect you would find anything the first day you tried."

"Well, I didn't expect it either; but if you play your cards right you'll make something of this chance."

"You haven't told me what it is yet."

"You know Brainerd, the dry goods man? I buy most all my prints and some other things of him."

"Yes, I know."

"There's going to be a chance there at New Year. He won't pay but two hundred dollars the first year."

Warren turned up his nose, but answered, "I supposed I should have to take little or nothing at the first go-off; but it's the start I want. Just let me get well up in the business, I'll go ahead. There's no chance for a smart fellow here; it's two cents' worth of snuff, a yard of unbleached cotton, a pint of molasses, six tallow candles; that's about the way our slate reads. What's the use of an enterprising fellow spending his life that way? I want a bigger business."

"I wish you might have it, Warren; but I've made a very comfortable living for my family here. I hope you'll never be worse off."

"Yes, you've made a comfortable living, father;

but you've worked pretty hard. You see the trouble is, the profits count up by coppers. I want to go ahead faster; sell my cotton by the piece or bale, or else my molasses by the hogshead, and count my profits in dollars. — Brainerd? What is it I've heard about him? A kind of slow coach, isn't he?"

"I don't know that he is as much of a driver as some in his line; but he does a good safe business, and foots up handsome profits at the end of the year. When you've seen as much of business men as I have, you'll know that it isn't always the men that make the most noise that do the most or the best business."

"I know that. Even here, in this backwoods place, I've learned to look out for the noisy fellows. Brainerd is one of the goody sort, isn't he?"

"Yes, I believe he is; but there's no sham about him; he's honest and straightforward. You know we never have any trouble about his goods."

"Well, I should rather have gone where they are more up to snuff; but I must take what I can get, I suppose."

"And you'd be more thankful for it, Warren, if you knew how scarce chances are. Why, I dare say there are five hundred young men in the city to-day—I don't know that I should put it too high if I said a thousand—that would be glad to jump into that place."

"I'm thankful, and I'm very much obliged to you,

father ; all I said was that I was afraid Brainerd was a little old foggy, and a fellow wouldn't get posted up in the extra touches there. However, I've learned some sharp dodges here."

"You must look out not to be too sharp, Warren."

"Trust me. What's that?" The door was shaken, first by trial of the knob, which refused to yield, then by blows of a fist.

"The light shows through the chinks in the shutters," said Mr. Brigham.

"Why don' yer ope ze door? Keep fell' stan' here's all night," said the applicant for admission.

"It's that drunken scamp, Jack Harms," said Warren. "He wants more liquor. He's been here all the afternoon drinking and chattering. He's had enough for one day ; besides, if he gets in there'll be no getting rid of him."

"I don't like to have him bawling round that way. It isn't respectable. We're taxed for constables, but they're never round when they're wanted."

"Lez fell-in, er zay. I goz out er grog. Goz some money."

"Perhaps he only wants his jug filled. I'll see," said Mr. Brigham. And he climbed upon a barrel that stood near a window, and peeped through the aperture in the shutters. "Yes, that's it," jumping down. "I'll just slip out of the back door and get his jug. We must stop his abominable racket some

way, or we shall be in the *Temperance Record* next week.'

The proprietor of the largest store in the country crept out of the rear door and hailed the ragged, reeling wreck of humanity. "Ah, Jack, that you?"

"Yer, zaz me. Zaz you, Mizer Brigum? giv'z yer han'." Mr. Brigham shook the inebriate's hand as he went on. "You're good fell', Brium. Mean fell's inside there; won't ope door when fell' on'y waz lizzle grog."

"What'll you have, Jack?" asked Mr. Brigham, taking hold of the jug. "I'll see if I can get it for you."

"Zaz goo' boy," patting him on the shoulder. "Gim me zome Ol' 'Macky, gozz and srong."

"Yes, I'll get the strongest. Got the money?"

"Yez. Ole woman giv' it. She didn't wanzer go."

Mr. Brigham took from the trembling hand the small coins that should have been spent for bread, and that were extorted from the long-suffering wife and mother by kicks and blows, disappeared in the darkness, and soon returned, bringing a jug filled with a liquid that he called "Old Jamaica;" a liquid which none but a dealer and a consumer whose palate had been seared by strong potations would have thought of dubbing in that way.

"That's a mean way of making money," said the son, when his father had come back and closed the door

"All trade must live. 'Twan't the money I cared for to-night though. I didn't want your mother to hear him; his wife was at the house only yesterday making her complaints. If I hadn't stopt his noise he'd have raised the whole town, and then gone down to Carty's and got worse liquor and paid more for it; so you see I'm a benefactor to Jack's wife and children after all."

We hope the sorrowful woman and half-starved little ones appreciated and were duly grateful for the kind offices of their benefactor, but we fear they were not; such is the perversity of human nature.

"I hope none of the temperance folks saw me hobnobbing with that drunken vagabond," said the benefactor; "if they did I shall be handsomely pilloried in the *Record*. There's one thing I haven't told you about, Warren. There is young Wadsworth at Brainerd's; he's got money. You may think it worth while to cultivate him; he's a wide-awake young chap, and if everything should be agreeable, might make a good partner some day."

"You're long-headed, father."

"I ain't a fool. It's best to keep your eyes about you; you know that it will be impossible for me to furnish you with much capital."

"I make no calculation that you will. Much obliged for the hint. I'll prospect young what's-his-name, and see if there is anything to be made out of him."

"It's getting late; we might as well shut up shop. Mother'll be sitting up for us."

The first of January Warren Brigham became one of Mr. Brainerd's salesmen. He brought from his natal town a trunk filled with semi-rustic wearing apparel, a fifty-dollar bill, a good constitution, a determination to join heart and soul in the race for money, and a conscience that had acquired elasticity in a store where no squeamish considerations for another's loss were ever allowed to interfere with a "fair" trade, and where children's bread was taken in exchange for maddening stimulants, on the plea that if not procured there, they would be elsewhere; an excuse that at least has the merit of age, if aged folly is ever meritorious.

Warren was not a young man who in common parlance would have been called unprincipled. He was simply an active, pushing youth, fully bent upon rising in the world, and ready to use any stepping-stones that came in his way, but without the intention of overleaping the bounds of conventional honesty. "The Greeny" was the subject of ridicule and practical jokes; but as he took the first good-naturedly, always returning a Roland for an Oliver, and watched his opportunity to repay the last in kind and with interest, the persecution soon ceased, and "the Greeny" gained in the store the reputation of a young man well able to take care of himself, a reputation that commands, and we think deserves, a certain respect.

Without his father's suggestion he would have been disposed to like Melville, for he was frank and open in his manners, and could give the comer much valuable information. The boy was well pleased to teach one older than himself; and Warren's pride never interfered with the pursuit of valuable knowledge, even though imparted by a junior. Melville was provided with books bearing upon trade and commerce, biographies of business men, merchant's magazines, and other like publications, which Warren's limited means would not allow him to purchase, but of which he was glad to avail himself. Melville was, too, one of the household of Mr. Carver, a popular young clergyman who was occupying a good share of the public attention. It was quite respectable to be able to say, "When I was at Mr. Carver's," to tell what "Mr. Carver said to me," and what "I said to Mr. Carver." It gave a man a standing with substantial people, Warren thought, to have it inferred that he was in free and easy terms with a prominent minister.

Mr. Brainerd saw much to approve in the new salesman's punctuality, his cheerful willingness to assume extra duty in time of unusual pressure, his intelligence and readiness, but his standard of honesty was far below his employer's mark. More than once Mr. Brainerd had expressly forbidden him to represent his goods as in any respect different from what they were, but Warren enjoyed making a sharp trade as much as a hungry dog does gnawing a bone, and always

offered the excuse that he had done no more than everybody did.

"Ah! how are you, Charley?" said Warren, meeting an old acquaintance as he came into the store, and shaking hands with him, "glad to see you."

"How are you, old fellow? I'm in a tremendous hurry. Got any Mercho prints?"

"How do you like these?" said Warren, turning to a large pile of prints, and throwing out two or three pieces. "You buyer for your store now?"

"Yes, the old gentleman is tired of going back and forth in the cars, and says I must take my turn at it; in fact, he leaves most all the business to me now. Are these Merchos? Seems to me that isn't the same mark they used to have."

"These cotton factories, some of them, have half-a-dozen different labels," answered Warren.

"You are mistaken about those prints, Mr. Brigham, We haven't a piece of Mercho in the store," said Mr. Brainerd, who was standing a few yards behind Warren, and heard the conversation.

The young man turned round, faced his principal, and with an air of astonishment said, "They are not Merchos, sir?"

"Not Merchos, but I consider them quite as good, if not better."

"A tip-top article, Charley," said Warren, turning back to his customer.

"Won't do; nothing else will pass muster. Can you tell me who has them?"

"No, really; anything else in our line?"

"Nothing else. Good morning."

Warren was exceedingly annoyed at Mr. Brainerd's interference, but he did not manifest his vexation by word or look till the store was closed for the night; then taking Melville's arm to walk home, he gave his indignation vent. "Did you notice Brainerd putting his nose into my trade this morning?"

"About those prints? Yes, I heard him."

"That's a pretty way to do business, isn't it? Take a fellow to task right before a customer. I don't mean to stay there another year if I can help it. Brainerd's altogether too slow for me; everything is slow there."

"He's got a splendid run of business; started it himself too."

"He-m-m, so, so! but he's got as gray as a badger doing it. Just look at Ketchum, Price and Ketchum, young men, all of 'em; set up, say five years ago, and see how they've gone ahead. I'm going to see if I can't get a chance there."

"It's a go-ahead concern, sure enough."

"Go-ahead! I should think it was. There'd be a chance for a fellow to use his brains; there's no chance at Brainerd's. If I make a good trade for him, ten to one I get a lecture for my pains, and he gives me to *understand* I ain't honest; confound his impudence,

I am honest. A man's a fool that takes money or goods, anything from his employer. When he's once begun he's never safe; he don't know when he'll be brought up with a round turn. I wouldn't take a cent's worth for my right hand."

"Of course you wouldn't. Did you think the prints were Merchos?"

"No, I wasn't such a goosie. I know all those labels just as well as I knew my A. B. C.'s when I was ten years old, but they are fully as good as Merchos. Brainerd said so himself when he meddled, now see what's the result of his meddling; if he'd let me alone Charley would have bought this morning; the prints would have turned out well, and we should have had him for a regular customer; but now he's afraid of me, and we shan't see him again very soon."

"It's the old story," said Melville. "'Honesty is the best policy.'"

"I say I was honest. I didn't tell him they were Merchos, and I would have sold him a good article. Call that dishonest? What do you think I heard old Chandler say the other day? 'You can't make any money unless you get the advantage of somebody!' That's what he said, and he's called one of the shrewdest men in the city."

"My father made money, and I don't believe he ever took advantage of anybody."

"Your father; I daresay not, but things have changed. There's forty times the competition there

was in his day, and the ways of doing business have changed. Why, even Brainerd don't make any fuss about the cards and blocks; he's got in his store any quantity of 'em marked, 'Warranted twelve yards.' There was a time, I suppose, when twelve yards meant twelve times thirty-six inches, and 'Warranted twelve yards' meant, if you don't find twelve times thirty-six inches here, bring it to me and I'll give you twelve times thirty-six inches. But now it don't mean any such thing; it means, 'look for yourself; if you haven't cut your eye-teeth that's your fault, not mine.'"

"When a piece of goods is marked 'Twelve yards,' it ought to measure twelve yards by the yardstick."

"And thumbs? Well, it doesn't; you see that's the way half the business is done, and lots of money made. It's the people's business that deal in one thing and another to understand all these things; then it's all right."

"I'm not sure that it is all right."

"Poh! yes it is. At anyrate, one man can't set all this straight. Suppose I set up shop to-day, and insist I won't buy or sell anything that is marked twelve yards that don't actually measure that. What a jolly time I should have. I shall take the world as I find it, and do the best I can in it; what's the use of my setting myself up better than the man that stands well to-day. Try it some day. Go to one of these old fellows that have made their fortunes, giving ten or

ten-and-a-half for twelve, and ask him if he thinks that is just exactly square edged? If he's good natured, he'll look knowing and tell you 'that's the way to do it now-a-days; everybody understands it, so it's all right.' If he isn't good-natured, he'll say, 'Sir-r-r, what do you mean by your impudence? You're a puppy, sir-r!' Either way you've made one bitter enemy. I can't afford to make enemies. I'll try to bale out the Atlantic with a teaspoon before I'll try to get everything done on the square, as my grandmother would hold it. I'll do better. I'll go ahead and make money. I'll not take any more advantage of the men I trade with than they'll want to take of me, I'll warrant. That's fair, I'm sure; turn about is fair play. But I'll get ahead, and when I've made my pile I'll ladle out some of it to a hospital, or a college, or a library, and have it called the Brigham College, or whatever it may be, and you'll see, if you live long enough, I'll be a great public benefactor, a merchant of wonderful business tact and probity, &c., &c."

"I mean to get ahead, too, but I will do it by fair means."

"Fair means, of course. I don't mean to do it by any other. All I say is, we've got to do it; we can't reform all the customs of trade, and we're dolts if we try to stick to the old foggy ways when everybody is taking up with the modern ideas. It would be like an old stage company trying to run an opposition to

a railroad. I've heard my grandmother talk to father about 'the just balance,' and all that sort of thing. He'd always hear what she had to say, and answer, 'Yes, mother; exactly so, mother.' Father is a first-rate son; but perhaps that very day Squire Seton would bring some butter to sell and take his pay in goods. 'How much is there, squire?' father would ask him. 'Well-l-l, twenty pounds, maybe half a pound over.' Now, the squire's butter always fell short an ounce or so in a pound; that didn't make any difference when it was done up in pound lumps. 'Warranted twelve yards' again, you see. We'd pass it along just as it came to us—nobody ever thinks of putting lump butter on the scales—but when we had to weigh it as we sold it, it didn't work quite so well. It was just so with everything he brought; he was the first one in town to put the berries his children picked into boxes; the wood wasn't scanted in those boxes, I can tell you. Now, what could we do? Weigh his butter and measure his potatoes, and tell him his weight and measure wasn't right? Catch my father doing anything of that sort; he knew too much for that; the 'squire' would have been up in arms in no time, accusing him of cheating! The squire's wife, too, is one of the greatest gossips anywhere round; we should have had the whole town on our heels, and had to shut up shop in a week's time. We just made it up some other way we knew how to arrange those things so as to save ourselves and

make everything go pleasantly; that's a great deal better than to live in a perpetual quarrel."

"Yes, to be sure; but it would be a great deal better still if your squire and everybody else would give good weight and measure."

"Nobody denies that, at least I don't; but don't you see, they won't. The squire and plenty more of our customers have got to be so sharp, we've got to be sharp to be a match for them. If you've a mind to be a sheep the wolves will eat you. I've no notion of being eaten or of being in hot water all the time trying to straighten my neighbours out. Times change, my boy; the fashion of doing business as well as the fashion of a hat; think I'm going round in a bell-top such as my grandfather wore? not I. There was one thing about our store I didn't like, though; the liquor part went against my grain. Father said we couldn't live without it, and I don't know as we could. There was a first-rate chance to arrange those little differences of weight and measure I told you about, when we come to put up liquor; but the worst of it was, if we sold to one we must to another, and I tell you I used to feel small selling a few cents' worth of tea to a poor, wretched, shivering, hatchet-faced woman, when you know that her husband had just passed two or three times as much over the counter for grog. I believe that's what first gave me a disgust for a country store."

"I shouldn't wonder if I'd upset my dish with him,"

thought Warren, after he had parted with Melville. "So much for getting mad. Father always told me my trick of chattering would be the ruin of me. He has been brought up with such strict notions, he'll think I'm a horrid dishonest fellow, when I'm nothing of the sort. He'd get rid of his strict notions quick enough, though, if he was in any other store than Brainerd's."

CHAPTER XII.

AIMS.

MELVILLE had never before seen Warren in the mood he was in that night. Melville was fully determined to become wealthy; but, with the sanguine expectations of youth, he had had little doubt that he could attain his object in honourable, straightforward business, as his father had done, and as Mr. Brainerd was doing. He had listened to Warren's expression of coarse, unscrupulous greed with disgust,—a disgust, however, that the young man's last remark had gone far to counteract. "Warren is a good-hearted fellow after all!" he concluded; "he has associated with a rough, small-minded set; he don't mean half as badly as he talks."

For a time the boy did not seek the salesman's society, but Warren was purposely obtuse to any

attempts at avoidance, was so agreeable and chatty, such good company withal, that the restraint was of short endurance, and the intimacy soon became closer than ever. Though Melville was not such a novice in the ways of the world as to be ignorant of the "save-himself-who-can" theory of business, he had regarded it as a theory that no man of honour would put in practice. After Warren's *expose*, the theory was thrust upon the lad's attention in various ways. He heard gray-headed men speak of the good trades they had made by taking advantage of inexperience and over-trust. He heard the clerks in the store speak of the imitation of trade marks, and other ways of "taking the wind out of the sails" of a rival. He heard men whose social status was unexceptionable, whose names headed subscription lists, and were thought to give character to any enterprise, pronounced "old rats," who always got the best of a bargain.

Mr. Brainerd sent him with a commission to a store near the wharves; his errand required him to mount to the third floor. While he waited, he looked out of the rear window upon a large building. In the story parallel to the one where he stood were three men with overalls and paper caps on, and with their sleeves rolled up. They were stirring various powders, from time to time adding to the contents of the large wooden vessels before them. Melville watched them for a few moments; his curiosity was

excited, and he asked an explanation of a porter who was lowering bales.

"Doctoring spices and other things for Brown and Jones," was the answer.

"Doctoring spices?"

"Yes, extending 'em."

"Oh, adulterating them."

"That's pretty near it. They don't call it so, though. Brown and Jones are very respectable men, both of 'em."

"I shouldn't think they would like that kind of business then."

"I shouldn't either. I'd rather lower goods for two dollars a day, but they get kind of driven into it. I heard Brown tell our boss that Gray and Blackmore were underselling them, so they had to extend a trifle. You see if folks will have cheap goods they must be extended one way or another; just a touch of compensation, you see, youngster," said the porter who was somewhat of a philosopher.

Melville went back to Mr. Brainerd's store, wondering if all modern business was compensation, and if compensation in business meant that the seller should deceive the buyer. As when one who is near and dear is suddenly stricken with a disease that we had supposed rare, every second acquaintance that we meet repeats a story of his or his friends' similar sufferings; so did it seem as if people and events conspired to prove to the boy educated to honesty and

integrity that double-dealing was the order of trade. Mr. Brainerd was, he knew, an honest man, and dealt honestly, understanding the term in the old-fashioned way ; but among younger men he was rated rather as a reliable than as an enterprising merchant, and, as Warren said, had "grown grey before his fortune was made."

Stories often came to Melville's ears of the thousands Ketchum, Price and Ketchum, and other firms which were called enterprising, had made in a single venture or in a lucky rise ; these reports, true or untrue, Warren never failed to catch and repeat, for he was a great talker, and heartily enjoyed telling the news. It was on a cold, stormy evening in November that he again took Melville's arm to walk home. "No sun, no moon, no morn, no noon, no any time of day, No-venber," said he. "You're a lucky chap, Mel, you're going home to a nice house all warm and comfortable, and I'm going to a dingy old boarding house, where all they care for is the little money they get out of me."

"You are blue, old fellow ; it's quite a novelty to see you blue ; anything for novelty."

"The weather is enough to make Old Jollity himself blue."

"Come home with me. I'll have a fire up in my room after tea, and we'll go up there and draw down the curtains ; then we'll let the weather do its worst."

"I would, but your sister don't expect me ; besides,

maybe she'll be having company, — Reverend Mr. Somebody, or Deacon Whats-his-name and his wife."

"That don't make any difference, there's always somebody coming to our house. Emmeline says she never knows whether she goes to market for five or fifteen. Mr. Carver picks up half-a-dozen very likely, and when a man has been once and found out where we live he comes again *ad infinitum*. The little girl opposite says, 'that's the house all the boys go into.' One more at the tea table won't make any difference. Come, old fellow, come along!" added Melville, when Warren dropped his arm at the corner of the street.

"Well, the thoughts of your room and an open fire are too much," said Warren, again taking Melville's arm.

Mr. and Mrs. Carver welcomed their brother's friend. After tea in the warm, pleasant dining-room, and prayers in the study, the young men went upstairs to find a coal fire burning in the grate in Melville's room, and the gas lighted in the drop-burner.

"Ah, this is comfortable!" said Warren, throwing himself into an easy-chair by the table and unfolding a newspaper.

Melville exchanged his heavy boots for slippers, and, taking another easy-chair on the opposite side of the table, replied, "Yes, it's tolerable."

"Tolerable! that's the way with you fellows born

with your fortunes made; here you have this all ready to your hand," said Warren, looking at the tasteful carpet, the well-filled book shelves, the draped windows through which the storm could be heard but not seen, and coming back to the fire. "If there's anything makes a room look sociable and home-like, it's an open fire; wood first, that crackles and blazes, and that you can every few moments make blaze so much better with the tongs."

"Something to be at work upon," said Melville. "I like a coal fire best; that will keep steady right on, and mind its own business. A coal fire, once get it well started, takes care of itself, keeps along whether you watch it or not; but a wood fire is a regular eye-servant, makes a great fuss blazing and spluttering at first, but wants to be all the time stared at, or it will be smoking, or falling down, or snapping, doing something so you can't read in peace, but have got to lay down your book and give it a castigation, a shaking up, or a feeding. A wood fire is almost as much trouble as a cross baby."

"There's the difference in the bringing-up, you see; you've always had some one to coddle you. I've had to look out for myself. When you can't get a wood fire coal will do; but it took me ever so long to find out I mustn't turn the lumps bright side up. You see I always like to see the bright side of a thing, and now I have to hold hard for fear I shall take the poker and break up the big pieces,"

"What an uneasy chap you are, Warren."

"I like to be doing something; but coal is good enough for any reasonable man," and Warren leaned back in his chair, rubbed his hands, and basked in the warmth always so grateful after a raw, chilly day. "One of the first things I'll look out for when I get ahead a little will be a room just like this, and I'll have just such a fire in it," said he after a pause.

"You'll not have the room if it hasn't got the fire already burning in it, will you?" said Melville.

"I ain't on the way to getting many of the good things of life at Brainerd's, though," Warren continued, without noticing the interruption. "They say Ketchum, Price & Ketchum are going to make ten or twenty thousand on this last rise in cotton,—ten thousand sure."

"They say lots of things. Ketchum, Price & Ketchum don't deal in cotton with all the rest of the things they sell, do they?"

"No, but they do in cotton goods. The oldest Ketchum got wind of the rise, and went round and bought up all the cotton goods, and prints, and so on, he could lay his hands on. They are wide-awake."

"I should think they were. They are all round, and they manage to keep posted up as to what other concerns are about, and when they find there is going to be a rise they pitch in, and very often the men they buy of have to buy back at a higher figure."

"That is risky. They can't always see farther

into a millstone than everybody else. They don't brag as much about their losses as they do about their gains."

"They can see pretty far ahead; but if they lose in one speculation they are pretty sure to more than make it up in the next. There must be a good deal of excitement in it; 'twould keep a man's blood in motion. Now, just look at the way Brainerd goes to work. He buys a lot of goods, and sells them; when they are most gone he gets another lot of the same kind. If there happens to be a rise, he makes a dollar or two more than he expected to; if there's a fall, he loses. It is just like old Jacob peddling apples and doughnuts. He buys a barrel of apples and sells them; if they keep, he makes, maybe, half-a-cent a piece on them; if they get specked, he has to sell them to the newsboys for half-price; then, when he goes home at night he counts up his coppers, and if he has got more than it will take to get his bacon and brown bread the next day, he puts what's over into the old teapot; if he has to trade with the newsboys, why, then something has to come out of the old teapot. Now, I don't want, and I don't mean to peddle apples and doughnuts all my life."

"Brainerd is solid."

"So is Bunker Hill Monument, but it isn't very frisky."

"Yes; but you're pretty sure you won't come down some fine morning and find he's smashed up."

"No danger of his smashing up; he don't get up speed enough for that. But I'll tell you of what there is danger—that some of these go-ahead fellows, with full steam up, will pitch him off one side of the track and leave him wondering what hit him."

"It isn't quite so easy to do that. Mr. Brainerd has got such a steady set of customers he knows just how to take them, and a good many of them are afraid of your smash-ahead chaps."

"Yes, but those old-fogy fellows will be dying out, then what's young Brainerd and the other young fellows that are calculating to go into the firm going to do? The concern will get all rusted out before they get the management."

"There isn't much chance of us fellows getting into the firm; the sons and sons-in-law that are to be will want the chance."

"I believe you; the concern is a close corporation. You can tell by their talk that they mean to keep it in the family; and what's more, the man that stays there a few years will get to be just as fossiliferous as they are: he won't be fit to go anywhere else, he'll be so behind the age. Why, one of Ketchum's boys might come to our place and take a nap any time in the busiest season. I was at their place yesterday; it was all hurry and bustle; goods coming in at one door and going out at another; customers buzzing round, the partners all over the lot. Why, Brainerd's style and theirs makes me think of a neighbour of

ours up in the country ; he had a frisky colt that was always breaking his halter, and going off to stretch his legs on his own hook. There was an old man in the house, one of the best old souls that ever buttered a biscuit. That colt was one of his trials though, for he was sure to break his halter when all the boys were gone, and the old gentleman was stiff in the joints, and couldn't make one foot pass the other ; he always put out one foot and brought the other up to it. One day I was standing in the store-door, the colt went by whiz-z, full speed, head and tail up, nostrils open, and eyes shining ; he was a handsome fellow. Then about five minutes after the old gentleman went by so,"—and Warren hobbled across the room in the way he had described ; then sitting down, he added, "I tell you what it is, Meh, that sort of thing won't do for your humble servant."

"He must have field for his abilities," answered Melville laughing.

"I mean to see if I can't find a field for my abilities. I'd rather go to California and take my chance with a rocker ; there's motion in that at least. I'll see if I can't get in at Ketchum, Price & Ketchum's next year. They are going to enlarge their business and take another store."

"How do you find out everything?"

"Same way that they find out what they want to know,—by being round, and keeping my eyes and ears open. I scraped acquaintance with some of their

fellows right after I came down here. I've been round prospecting considerable, and I've come to the conclusion that that's the place for a man about my size."

"You 'll have to work tremendously."

"I don't care for that. I'm the boy that 'll do it, and I'm the boy that 'll get into their ways pretty quick. I won't whine over a little work; just get a good footing there, and make 'em think they can't do without you, and your fortune's made; they know a smart fellow when they see him. I'm going there to-morrow to talk with Ketchum; better let me sound him for you."

"I suppose Mr. Brainerd expects me to stay there."

"There was no time set, was there?"

"No; but he promised to raise my salary this year."

"He'd raise mine too, if I asked him, but I shan't do anything of the kind. You can get more salary at Ketchum's than Brainerd will give you, and take a regular salesman's place too; you look all of two years older than you are. If you stay at Brainerd's, in five years' time you may get to be a salesman at five hundred a year. I believe I can get four hundred at the Ketchum's now. I'll just sound him for you. I won't tell your name. There's no harm in knowing what you can do. It's a good thing to have two strings to your bow."

"No, there is no harm in finding out what a fellow

can do; but I shouldn't want Mr. Brainerd to think I didn't do just the right thing; and if I *should* leave, I had rather tell him myself than have him get it first from outside."

"I'll look out for that," answered Warren, taking up the paper that he had laid down while he was talking. He had succeeded in making Melville restless and discontented, and in persuading him to harbour the idea that a change would be for his advantage, and, moreover, to consent to the first steps towards a change being made. Warren meant to use the liberty given him to the uttermost, for he did not shrink from responsibility, and not only had his own ends to serve, but really thought that he was benefiting an associate. He was one of the people who understood the wants of others much better than they comprehended them themselves, and, as he expressed it, "hated to see people standing in their own light," unless, indeed, by so doing they allowed a clearer flood to fall upon him.

A more artful man might have searched for and failed to find arguments as potent as those he deduced by simply saying just what he thought, the two young men had so many ideas and feelings in common. Their principal aims were identical, though Warren, being more voluble, oftener spoke of his; they were both impatient to launch out for themselves, and eager to thrust aside any impediments. It was as if two pedestrians, just started on their day's journey,

saw high before them the hospice which each wished to reach, that they might look out upon the satisfying view around, and down upon the belated, discouraged climbers below, and confidently expected to find there—

“Sleep after toyle, port after stormie seas,
Ease after warre!”

Warren made sure of his call upon Mr. Ketchum by going before business had fairly commenced in the morning. The astute merchant, accustomed to judging of human nature with a view to his own emolument, quickly made his estimate of the young man who stood, hat in hand, in the private counting-room, thought he saw in him one who could be more than commonly useful, was ready to engage his services at double the price they had commanded, and told him his advancement would depend solely upon himself, his capacity for business, and the faithfulness with which he carried out the directions and ideas of his employers.

His own position secured, he spoke of Melville as a friend who wished to make a change and who, he thought, would be just the young man Mr. Ketchum would find valuable.

“A salesman?”

“Yes, sir.”

“He can come in and talk with us; we always choose to see a young man before engaging him,”

replied Mr. Ketchum, taking up a letter and breaking the seal.

Warren would have liked to have added something in commendation of Melville, but he had the good sense to see that any encomiums of his would be worse than useless at that time.

"That is an enterprising young man," said Mr. Ketchum, senior, to his younger brother, who passed into the counting-room as Warren went out. "What some young men would be worrying and badgering you about for a week he has done in five minutes; he is off about his business and has left me to mine. He comes here when his year is out with Brainerd."

Warren was on hand at the store at his usual time. As he passed in he gave the word to Melville. "All right; they want to see you," and did not mention the subject again for the day. But when the clerks were putting on their overcoats at night he asked, "You going to be at home this evening, Wadsworth?"

"Yes; will you come round?"

"I'll be round about eight o'clock. I've got to do an errand for mother that will take me out your way now."

"Well, I went to see Ketchum," said Warren, as two hours later he entered Melville's room.

"You are going there, I know. You looked, when you came in this morning, as if you had found the pot of gold."

"Did I look jolly? I agreed to go there. Ketchum

is a regular business man; don't say much, but every word tells. It didn't take me long to make my bargain; he knows just what he will do and what he won't. He wants to see you; said he'd tell you what salary he'd give you, and so on."

"I'm not sure that I shall go there. The fact is, Mr. Carver got me the place at Brainerd's. He's a friend of his, and I don't think he will like my leaving."

"It isn't for him to say, is it? Oh yes, he's your guardian! I forgot you wasn't your own man yet, but you're old enough to judge for yourself a little. Carver's a splendid fellow to preach a sermon—nobody better—but what does he know about business? He knows that Mr. Brainerd is a good sort of a man, pays his pew tax regularly, does the civil to the minister, and keeps a store down in town; but you're right in it and know all about it. If you tell Mr. Carver you'd rather be at Ketchum, Price and Ketchum's, he won't make any fuss. I can tell you one thing, though; if you want to go there it won't do to let much grass grow under your feet. I wouldn't stay at Brainerd's. You'll just crawl along at a snail's pace. If you go to Ketchum's you can jump right over two or three years, and you'll be as far ahead when you're twenty-one as you'll be when you are twenty-five if you stay where you are. A year is a good while to a fellow when he's trying to make a start."

"Yes, I know it is. I will see what Mr. Carver will say about it."

Mr. Carver did not approve of Melville's proposal to leave Mr. Brainerd's employment. "I thought you were quite contented," he said; "what fault do you find?"

"No fault at all, only he is rather slow, and I think I can do better."

"Slow! if he is, he is sure, is he not?"

"Sure, yes; but I don't see why I can't be faster and be sure too."

"Fast growth is seldom solid growth. Mr. Brainerd is a man of unswerving integrity: one who makes his money in the regular course of honourable trade, a man whom your father knew and respected; indeed, I thought myself highly favoured in being able to introduce you to a store where you would be well grounded in your chosen pursuits, and profit by the advice and example of a man of such unexceptionable principles. Is not Mr. Brainerd all I have thought him to be?"

"Yes, I don't know but he is; but what's the use of my staying there when I can get on faster somewhere else?"

"I am a young man myself still, and I can understand the eagerness with which the young pant for the responsibilities and activities of life, but I am old enough to have known more than one case in which young men, impelled by this impatience, but actuated

by good motives, have made mistakes that could never be remedied—mistakes that have warped their whole life.”

“You don’t know about business ways and business men. Mr. Brainerd is old-fogy in his notions; if I stay there it will be to plod on year after year. I want to go into business for myself before I am fifty years old.”

“Certainly you do, and your friends wish you should; but really, Melville, I believe you will gain nothing by being in haste to undertake for yourself. What you want now is to lay a good solid foundation of business habits, to see others work in your line of labour, and to learn by their mistakes as well as by their successes. A few years now spent in apprenticeship, irksome though they may be, will be of incalculable benefit in the future.”

“What’s the reason I can’t learn my trade better in a large shop than a small one? Isn’t it better to see a big job of work done than a little one? I don’t want to be spelling at my alphabet all my days.”

“If you are fully bent on leaving Mr. Brainerd, I as your guardian shall not decidedly oppose you; but I should not do my whole duty if I did not tell you that I should yield to your wishes, and should not be guided by my own judgment of what is for your own interest in the long run. Mere accumulation is not the most desirable object in life. Smiles says: ‘The young man, as he passes through life, advances

between long lines of tempters ranged on either side of him, and the inevitable effect of yielding is degradation in a greater or less degree. It is in the outworks of the habits formed in early life that the real strength of the defence must lie.* I think, nay, I am sure, that the habits you form in your early business life will give colour and direction to your whole career, and decide whether you shall, when you are ready to throw off the harness, look back with satisfaction and approval, or with regret and self-condemnation. I have feared that your friend, Warren Brigham, was one of your tempters. I believe him to be singularly free from the vices that beset young men in large cities; but if I judge him correctly he is a thorough devotee of Mammon. When he attempts to counsel you, do you take that into account? Honestly now, Melville, is it not because of his persuasion that your opinion of Mr. Brainerd and his store has changed?"

"He thinks I could do better; so do I. I can judge for myself about that. I don't need any one to tell me."

"Don't allow yourself to be too much influenced by him, Melville, and don't decide in haste. Think the matter over deliberately; don't let the question of present profit sway you; provided for, as you are, a year's salary is of little importance; it is your future good that you should consider. You know what Mr.

* The author is not sure that Smiles' *Self Help* was published at the time Mr. Carver was conversing with Melville, but the sentiment is not one that relies upon a date.

Brainerd and his store are; learn what you can of Ketchum, Price and Ketchum, and then ask yourself whether your father, could he speak to you now, would advise the change; whether, were you called upon for your opinion, you would conscientiously advise a young friend to make the change. I am almost sure if you will give these questions a careful, independent consideration, you will answer them in the negative, as I certainly think you ought."

Melville considered that his dignity was compromised by Mr. Carver's opposition; the guardian had spoken as one who was secure in his ability and right to advise, and had even hinted that stronger measures came within his province. "Pretty well for him to mount the high horse to me, and tell me I don't know my own mind, but have to get Warren to give me orders!" was the lad's soliloquy. It was with the impression of his conversation with his brother-in-law fresh upon his mind, that he met Warren.

"Ah, good morning!" said Warren, clapping Melville's shoulder, "what did Ketchum say?"

"I haven't seen Ketchum."

"You haven't? You'll lose your chance if you ain't lively. You must catch that ball as it's flying."

"I stopped to talk with my guardian this morning, so I hadn't time to go to see Mr. Ketchum," answered Melville, emphasising the words "my guardian."

"And what did 'my guardian' say?"

"Just what I supposed he would. Better stay where I am. Mr. Brainerd is a good, honest man."

"Yes, and a member of my church; one of the men I don't care to offend."

"He didn't say anything of that sort. Carver is not a selfish fellow."

"No, I don't think he is; very likely he didn't think anything of the sort. But it's just as I thought it would be; he takes a clerical view of a business affair. Every man to his trade, I say. Now, if I wanted somebody to tell me where I could find a man that would make a first-rate parson, or if I wanted to know how to make a first-rate parson out of a young fellow, I'd go and get the Rev. Mr. Carver to put me on the track, because I should know that he had seen lots of parsons, and had a chance to see the difference in them, and because he's been through the parson-making mills himself. But if I wanted to know the quickest and surest way to make a tip-top businessman, I shouldn't care that" (snapping his thumb and forefinger) "for what the Reverend Mr. Carver would tell me, for he only sees business men right side out and 'right side up, with care,' and never was in a dry goods school a day in his life.

"However, I don't want to interfere. I wouldn't have you mind what I say; certainly not if my ideas and your guardian's don't run in the same vein; all I've got to say is, if you conclude not to try Ketchum, I shall be sorry I spoke to him about you. I wouldn't

have him think I am a shilly-shally kind of a fellow, or my friend was either."

The next morning Melville took his breakfast in haste, and excused himself. "What's your hurry?" his sister asked.

"I want to see a man before I go to the store," he answered, as he stood with his hand on the door-knob, and he did not wait to hear anything more.

"I begin to think I made a mistake accepting the guardianship," said Mr. Carver, when the front door closed behind Melville. "Perhaps some other friend would have filled the place better. I took it with good intentions though. I thought it would be more agreeable to Agnes that a member of the family should stand in that relation, and I hoped that my influence could be quietly exerted over the boys, and that I should be able to do more for them than any one else."

"I think you have."

"But I seem to be making a lamentable failure with Melville. You and I, I am sure, have done all that we could do for him since he has been here, and until lately I think he has appreciated our kindness, but now that raw country youth, who, I believe, thinks himself competent to advise the merchant princes themselves, steps in and takes him quite out of our hands. This is the first time any difference has arisen between Melville and myself. I gave him *my opinion* clearly and firmly. I have not a doubt

that Brigham advised him to the opposite, and we see whose advice he elects to follow, that of an acquaintance of months' standing, who very likely has his own ends to serve, rather than that of relatives and lifelong friends who are anxious for his welfare."

"It is very discouraging, I know, but we are not the first who have found youth self-confident and headstrong. I do not think Melville acts altogether on Warren's advice; you do not, it appears to me, make allowance enough for his natural temperament. He has been from babyhood a strong-willed boy. Father, with all his steadiness and patience, at times found it difficult to control him."

"As for Brigham's influence, Melville was as far as I can remember perfectly satisfied at Mr. Brainerd's till after that young man came there; since that we have heard that Mr. Brainerd's slow, old foggy, and so on."

"If young Brigham has more influence over Melville than you, is it not because they have both started for the same goal? Your aim is to advance the kingdom of God in this world, that you may see it and lead others to see it in its full glory in another. Melville's aim and Warren Brigham's is to secure the kingdom of this world. Is it strange that those who are travelling in the same direction should point out the way to each other and urge each other on? You stand with your face heavenward, the glamour of the world is behind you, and you see through its reflected

light on to the brightness beyond. Their eyes are bent earthward, trying to find the places where Mammon has concealed his treasures."

"I do not see that we can do more than we have done to persuade Melville to look heavenward. I felt that so long as he was with Mr. Brainerd he was constantly seeing proved the fact that business may be conscientiously and successfully transacted by a religious man. What was that I was reading to you last evening; was it not this? 'There may be other views of virtue and vice, of holiness and sin, higher and better than these.' But there will always be some in the world who will need to remember that a good man is not only religious and just, but wise; and that a bad man is not only wicked and sinful, but a miserable, contemptible fool. Now, I fear this is just where the slowness that Melville complains of in Mr. Brainerd comes in, though probably he would not acknowledge it even to himself. It is a slowness that any minister may well be proud of in the business men of his congregation, a slowness to adopt worldly maxims and expedients, modern constructions of the word honesty; a slowness to take advantage of the ignorance and necessities of others; a slowness to make money by any but strictly honourable means; a slowness that, if Melville could only be induced to see it, is the deepest of shrewdness, for it will finally win. I have told him that I very much prefer that

he should remain where he is; farther than that I have not thought best to go."

"He must learn some things by experience. We will not be discouraged about him. Rufus and Stanley are getting along finely, Agnes writes me; they come home from Bridgeherst every Saturday afternoon in fine spirits, and often bring a fellow-student with them."

"Yes, the professors like to have the young men go home to spend Sunday when their homes are near enough to allow it. I think I will arrange an exchange with Doctor Anstace as soon as I can; then I shall see the boys all together. I have not seen them all at home since Rufus and Stanley entered college."

"I have not."

"Suppose you go with me. We will manage to go in a morning train, and so have several hours with Agnes before the boys come."

"I should like to go—on the whole, I think I had better stay and take care of the good doctor."

"Always the faithful housewife," said the husband rising.

Mr. Carver found Doctor Anstace quite ready for an exchange with his former student, for the young city minister was ascending on the wave of popularity, and received numberless invitations to preach anniversary and ordination sermons, and to officiate at occasional services; indeed, had he answered all these applications in the affirmative, he would have been

seen by his own charge only as they managed to catch glimpses of him in pulpits or on platforms outside of his own church.

By dint of forethought and management Mr. Carver went to Dartfield by a morning train. The Reverend Mr. A. called to consult him as to the best mode of raising funds for his needy Western church. Brother B. of Suburbville, who was trying to establish services in his village, called to say that a sermon from the popular Mr. Carver would draw many outsiders to the hall, and greatly encourage the struggling handful. The Reverend Mr. C., agent of the Important Society, called to ask whether the pastor of the —— Church would like to have the annual begging sermon preached on the next Sunday but one. The Reverend Mr. D. called to say that he could not be prepared to read the expected papers at the next meeting of the association, and should be obliged to fall back on his young brother as substitute. The Reverend Mr. E., of the church across the way, called to enlist the interest of his eloquent and respected friend (for we are very good friends, he added in parenthesis, if we cannot always strike hands on the doctrines), in a new scheme for the amelioration of the condition of the poor of the city. Mr. F. called to report the minds of the people, whom he had privately consulted as to a change in the hour of service. Mrs. G. called to request her minister to visit Mrs. H., who was seriously ill. Mrs. I. sent—— but we spare our readers,

The maid whose duty it was to answer the door-bell, and which duty came in as interruption to her regular work, found, as she had often done before, that the interruptions thrust aside the appointed task. Mrs. Carver saw the letters of the alphabet one after another, in the form of clergyman, brethren, sisters, and messengers, sometimes more than one at a time, and in many cases gave the desired response. When Melville came home to dinner she congratulated herself that though she had not had a moment for domestic oversight or for rest, by persuading her husband to an early start, she had secured for him some quiet hours at the old home.

Agnes was surprised to see him promptly, for though Emmeline had written that her husband would come by a certain train, if not unavoidably detained, the sister hardly expected him, for she had learned that unavoidable detention was the rule, not the exception. At the station he was met by Brown, shorn of his curls, a thorough boy rejoicing in his emancipation from petticoats, and in the possession of his first pair of "real boots," and contemptuous of Jane's oversight. "Why, Brownie, my boy, where are your curls?" exclaimed Mr. Carver, seizing the little fellow by both arms, jumping him up till their faces were on a level, and then kissing him.

"Mens don't kiss at the depôt," said Brownie, struggling to be set down. "You got some mud on your coat; it come'd off my boots. See my boots! they

don't let the water come in," and he splashed into a puddle on the side walk before Jane could stop him.

"Men don't walk through puddles if they can help it," said the girl.

"That they don't," said Mr. Carver.

"I wish she'd go home her own self. I can take care of my own self," said the boy.

"Take my hand then, and we will walk round all the puddles, if we can," said Mr. Carver.

Jane fell back, and Brown walked staidly by the young minister's side, relating the marvellous adventures of his dog Whip, whom he did not let come to the depôt "for fear he would get runned over."

"But the curls, little man; the curls? Where have they gone?"

"I didn't like 'em, and me and Agnes got the barber man to cut 'em off. Aggie's got 'em up in her drawer. I'll tell her she may give you some, if you want 'em."

"Thank you. Why did you not like them?"

"Cause I don't. I don't like long hair, just like a girl's. My brover Mel. don't have curls, Robbie Perkins' sister, she has curls. Robbie don't though, he have man's hair, just like mine is. You don't have curls?"

"No, I don't think I could have curls if I wanted them, and I don't want them."

"I don't," said Brownie with the gravity and de-

cision of a man who felt that the force of his reasoning was acknowledged and the subject was exhausted.

"You have not told me how sister Aggie is," said Mr. Carver.

"She is good, she's real good, she is the bestest sister ever was."

"What makes you think so?"

"Don't you think so?" said the child, opening his eyes in amazement.

"Yes, I think she is very dear and very good, and I don't think it is every boy who has such a dear good sister."

"Robbie Perkins' sister says, 'Oh, dear! boys make such a noise. Mother, do make those boys be still!' We wasn't making loud noise; only just playing horse and saying, Who-a-a-gl'ong."

"And what does sister Aggie say when you play horse in the house?"

"Some days she don't say anything; she makes real good reins. Some days she says it's bestest playing something else, and she plays too. I like her plays when they ain't sit-still ones. Robbie does too. Robbie's sister says, 'Go way, boys; can't do anything when you're round.' I don't like Robbie's sister. He likes Aggie. I thinks he'd better. There she is waiting for us;" and the talkative little man dropped Mr. Carver's hand, ran up to his sister, who stood at the open door, and threw his arms about her neck as she stooped. "I told Mr. Carver you were the bestest

sister in the world," he said, as if in making the statement he had discharged a well-known duty.

"And did you tell Mr. Carver that I had the dearest little brother in the world?" asked Agnes, as she rose to shake hands with her brother-in-law.

"He thinks that is self-evident, I suppose," said Mr. Carver, as the child, catching sight of Whip, ran after him.

"A student still, I see," and the minister took up a thick, closely printed volume from the table.

"Not a student, only a reader."

"I thought, now that the boys are away from home so much, you might find opportunity to bow again at the shrine of Minerva. Emmeline has often told me that was your early ideal."

"Yes, that was my first ideal, but Providence willed otherwise, and pointed plainly to other work. I could not refuse it.

"Since then I have, at home or abroad, found ample employment, though I have not, I think, allowed my mind to rust out. So you see, my good brother, why I am a reader, not a student."

"I see that my good sister, whether she distinctly states the fact or not, has the best of all ideals. I see well that she knows what is that charity that St. Paul tells us is better than even faith and hope, the charity that seeketh not her own, that is ready to spend and be spent for those who are not of her own household, as well as for the brethren in the flesh."

"You think too highly of me. I did not mean to laud myself."

"No, our sister Agnes could not do that."

"I know you did not. I did not intend to flatter."

"How is Melville?"

"Well, and interested in his business, though bent upon leaving Mr. Brainerd's. He has told you, I suppose, that he goes to Ketchum, Price & Ketchum in a few weeks."

"Yes; he seems so bent upon it that I did not say much against it. He knows my choice, but doubts my judgment, perhaps with reason."

"He has taken it upon himself to decide in this matter; he is no longer a child, and I believe it is the part of wisdom for us seniors to acquiesce. He must learn by experience; how dearly he will have to pay for this leaving I cannot say. Ketchum, Price & Ketchum are, as far as I can ascertain, men whose note is undoubted, who are rapidly rising to a commanding position in their line of business, but who never make a loss, large or small, that they can legally slide off upon another, and who stand ready to sell you black for white, provided there is no law against it, and you are so blind as not to see the difference."

"In other words, you do not think them honourable men."

"I fear not, if by honourable you mean dealing as you would be dealt by."

"Melville knows this?"

"He will not allow it. He is, I think, dazzled by their brilliant business career and prospects."

Agnes sighed.

"I know that 'evil communications corrupt good manners,' but," continued Mr. Carver, "we may hope, I do hope, that Melville will pass through this ordeal without permanent injury. Nothing that human affection or foresight could provide was wanting in his early training. I cannot think that will all be lost, and that he will sell honour and integrity for filthy lucre. When we have thrown around him all the protection our affection affords we must leave him in the hands of God, who knows that we are all 'set in the midst of many and great dangers,' and beg Him to 'grant' our brother 'strength and protection,' and willingness, if he is in the wrong, to return to the right."

"Yes, we must leave him. There are times when we are brought face to face with our own powerlessness. I fear I have trusted too much to home influence, and have been too confident that, by devotion to the work father and mother began, I could give the bent to my brother's character that no after temptations could counteract."

"All means to ends, Agnes, though our kind Father does often bid us lean upon Him by showing us our own feebleness. I hear of Rufus and Stanley often by Bridgeherst men, always favourably."

"Yes, Rufus has taken hold of study in good

earnest now. I have feared that want of application would be his great failing; he works now more like one who has a definite purpose in view; at least, I judge so, by what Stanley tells me. Rufus will never be as brilliant as Stanley. Stanley will be the talented man of the family."

"Rufus is becoming quite a politician."

"Yes, he took a great interest in the election last year, carried torches, and harangued admiring boys from barrel heads," replied Agnes laughing.

"Preparing for his maiden speech, I suppose. His patriotism will take a less oleaginous and crocky turn by-and-by."

"I hope so. Professor Buffum says that a young friend of his—a classmate of our boys—told him that Rufus had already gained the reputation of an incipient orator."

When the boys were all gathered in the family sitting-room, Mr. Carver led them to speak of their future. Melville extolled the pleasures a rich man could command, and the position which money gives.

"What is money?" Rufus interrupted.

"'Who steals my purse steals trash!'

"Give me power. What a jolly thing it is to sit behind a good span of horses; there is will, strength, speed. With the reins in my hand I can make them mind my slightest whim. It is grand, but it must be grander to control men. Just think of making a whole nation watch your nod."

"Yes," said Stanley, "your people and your nation are like your horses; they will like you as long as you keep a tight hold of the reins, unless they get the bit in their teeth; then they will twitch the reins out of your hands, and leave you sprawling in the dust, lucky if you haven't broken your crown. The man who writes what is worth remembering, he is the man who has real power. I wouldn't give a straw for the celebrity that has to be watched and held all the time."

"Make money," said Melville, "then you can build yourself a monument that will make generation after generation thank you long after you are dead and gone. That is the thing to do. Make money and build a college, or a hospital, or a church, and have a tablet or a statue put up in it, as they do in Westminster Abbey. That's the way to immortalise yourself!"

"Immortalise yourself! It will be a short-lived immortality; it certainly will if your monument is a church. Build a church, and leave orders to have your bones put under it, and for a great sarcophagus with an inscription setting forth the virtues and the generosity of the man who erected this sacred edifice, and long before your bones have gone to dust another of your smart fellows, who think they can buy immortality if they scrape together coppers enough, will come along and see a first-rate chance 'to set up the table of the money-changers,' 'to buy, and sell, and

get gain,' and he will 'break down your carved work with axes and hammers,' tumble your old bones into a pine box, and pack them away somewhere 'with a heap of meaner bones.' No, Melville, don't invest your immortality in a church in this go-ahead country," said Stanley.

"If you want to be remembered, do something that is worth remembering. Write your name on the age," said Rufus. "Be a leader, and make your mark that way. Control men; just think how far back we can go with Roman, Greek, and Egyptian Emperors. It is the great men, the great rulers that see the world stand in awe of them while they live and are remembered when they die. All the celebrated rich men in old times were men of power too—rulers."

"There is not much chance for that kind of remembrance in this country; if there was, what is that kind of immortality compared to the immortality of men of genius. There is old Homer; he has been read and admired, yes, and exerted an influence, been a power for thousands of years; he is only one," said Stanley.

"Yes," retorted Rufus, "those old writers didn't know how famous they were going to be, but Alexander, and Constantine, and Napoleon enjoyed their power and their celebrity themselves."

Agnes and Mr. Carver sat by amused and interested auditors, while the boys had each lauded his cherished aim. Mr. Carver was surprised at Rufus' enthusiasm; the boy was certainly wonderfully roused.

"I thought, brother Rufus," said the minister, "that you hoped to distinguish yourself as a mechanic; that you were going to be one of the men who inspire matter with mind, and cause it to wipe the sweat from the brow of toil."

"Toil doesn't always thank you for wiping away the sweat," said Stanley.

"That it does not," said Rufus. "What is the use working with all your might, and when you think you have hit just the right idea, try to set the affair going, and it won't go, or if it does somebody else has been making something just like it, or else steals your work, puts a little of his own to it, and gets all the credit and advantage."

"Not all the advantage," said Mr. Carver. "The world gets the advantage if the invention is really valuable."

"Well, the world is very ungrateful," said Stanley.

"That it is and always has been," Rufus replied.

"What a hard time poor old Faust had because he could print books faster than monks could write them. That is the way inventors were treated two or three centuries ago, suspected of sorcery, imprisoned, so that some great man should have the benefit of their work, though the mortal enemies of workmen, and so afraid of their lives, and nearly all of them poor as rats all their days. I came to the conclusion it wouldn't pay, even if I did get hold of something worth having. Look at the men who got up the great

improvements in cotton-weaving and spinning. Arkwright was about the only one who didn't die poor, and he took all his best ideas from other men. Doctor Cartwright, who you know, Mr. Carver, was a Doctor of Divinity, got a grant from Parliament of ten thousand pounds for his power-loom, and he proved that he had spent thirty thousand. Crompton received a grant of five thousand pounds when there were four million six hundred thousand spindles working his mules in England.* He spent the money, and if his townsmen hadn't given him an annuity of sixty-three pounds, would have died wretchedly poor."

"You go back for your instances, don't you, Rufus?" asked Agnes.

"Not so very far. Crompton died in 1827. There was Jacquard, a Frenchman. He invented a loom to weave figured fabrics; the workmen spoiled the cloth to make people think the machines were good for nothing. His looms were burned, and he was mobbed; but after a while the French concluded that he was a man to be proud of, and they treated him accordingly; and when he died got up tablets, and statues, and portraits.† I believe I am getting a habit of lecturing, I have heard so many lectures lately. No inventions for me. I am going to be a statesman; you'll see me hold the reins some day."

* *Brief Biographies of Inventors*, by Bennet Woodcroft.

† The Chamber of Commerce of Lyons placed a marble tomb over his grave in 1861.

"Inventors may have served an ungrateful public," said Mr. Carver, "but they have been benefactors of their race."

"Power for me!" said Rufus.

"Money is power," said Melville. "It will buy anything!"

"It won't buy fame," said Stanley. "There is many a rich blockhead in the world."

"Money, power, fame; these are your aims. And what will Brownie do when he is a man?" Mr. Carver asked, catching the child as he was crossing the room.

"Brownie wants to 'joy himself," the boy answered, struggling to get free.

"Money, power, fame, pleasure—these are your aims now, boys. Brownie, when he is older, will give up his child's aim and find a more solid one. I wish you all success, but we must remember that there are successes that are the most lamentable of failures. There is a wealth that brings wretched poverty of spirit. There is a power that is secured by truckling concessions and craven compliance. There is a fame that is bought by abusing talents and violating conscience. There is a pleasure that is ashes in the throat and nauseating in the retrospect. But I am confident that you, one and all, would welcome failure rather than rejoice over such success. I hold that my profession is the highest, the best that a man can embrace. What position higher, better, than that of an ambassador of the King of kings, if he truly and

faithfully delivers the message of his Great and Holy Master? But there must be men of affairs as well as preachers of righteousness; singers of praise as well as expounders of faith. More convincing and persuasive than any arguments that lips can utter, are consecrated enterprise, consecrated statesmanship, and consecrated genius. Yes, Melville, Rufus, Stanley, I wish you all success!"

CHAPTER XIII.

PROMOTION NOT ALWAYS ADVANCEMENT.

MELVILLE paid deference enough to Mr. Carver's advice to make a few inquiries respecting the firm of Ketchum, Price and Ketchum, not so much because he sincerely wished to elicit information, as that he might be able to say that he had asked it. Most of his questions were put to young men whose sense of honour was not delicate enough to be easily startled, or whose judgment, like his own, was warped by the knowledge of the steady success of the firm in question. In one case only did he apply to a man of gray hairs and experience. Meeting in the street Mr. Balston, who was one of the genial men who always have a "Good morning, pleasant day!" for the most casual acquaintance, and who was often seen at Mr. Brainerd's store, Melville, acting upon the

impulse of the moment, stopped him, and put the direct query, "Mr. Balston, what do you think of Ketchum, Price and Ketchum?"

The bluntness was very boy-like certainly, but Melville had been brought up to plain speech, and had not yet learned to approach a subject circuitously, and while talking on another topic incidentally gain the opinion sought. A woman's postscript is said to contain the real subject-matter of her letter; are there no post remarks in the conversation of the less artful sex?"

"Think of Ketchum, Price and Ketchum?" repeated Mr. Balston with an amused smile; "I think they are carrying all before them."

"Do you think they are honest men?" asked Melville, somewhat embarrassed.

The corners of the popular, good-natured man's mouth twitched as he stopped a moment and looked at his interlocutor with the "Your very young, sir," expression; but he had no intention of trusting so incautious a youth with any disparaging comments that might reach the ears of an influential firm. "Better go on 'Change and ask that question; there are men there who can tell you all about them," he answered, and went on. Melville went on his way with the disagreeable consciousness that he had made himself ridiculous, and had been laughed at. He was more determined than ever to decide for himself, resigned his position at Mr. Brainerd's, and accepted

the offer which Mr. Ketchum made him of an increased salary; but he had not been in the new store a single day before he would have gladly returned to his former place; before Ketchum, Price and Ketchum's salesman thought with envy of Mr. Brainerd's youngest boy. Never before had he known such a loss of self-respect. At Mr. Brainerd's there was seldom a word uttered that might not have been unblushingly repeated in any lady's drawing-room. Profanity was never heard from the lips of any one connected with the establishment, and customers learned that irreverent utterances were out of place there. This had not attracted Melville's attention; he had taken it as a matter of course, for he had been accustomed to associate swearing with degradation and low life, had held himself above all the boys at school who ever vented their passions in an oath when out of the teacher's hearing, and had set down as no gentleman the adult whose talk was interlarded with calls upon the Holy Name; but at Ketchum, Price and Ketchum's profane jokes and ribald oaths were the order of the day. Partners, salesmen, porters, and even boys used the name of the Deity, and invoked Divine vengeance as freely as the child uses his mother-tongue. Melville shuddered, and the blood ran cold in his veins as Mr. Price pronounced maledictions on the head of a delinquent, or cursed the man who had failed to keep his agreement. The youth asked himself, was he part and parcel of this establishment? Must he stay day

after day and listen to what his innermost soul loathed? Would it not be the wisest and most manly course to go to the counting-room and tell Mr. Ketchum that he could not remain? If he did, would he not be asked for his reason, and could he give the true one to the prosperous merchant of whom he stood in awe? He was aware that his pre-occupation made him careless of his duties, and that Mr. Price's eye was often upon him noting his lack of interest. He saw but little of Warren through the day, for his place was in another part of the large store, and when it was time to leave at night, he quickened his own footsteps rather than join the knot of young men of whom his friend was one. He remembered his first day at Mr. Brainerd's, and the different feelings with which he had approached his sister's house after business hours. He had worked hard, and was as much fatigued as he had often been after a match game at football, yet he was in good spirits, and knew that he had made one step towards man's estate; but on this evening the fact stood clearly before him that in his haste to rise he had descended morally.

As when we walk muddy streets we look ruefully at the garments bespattered by wheels rolling in the filthy compound, so did Melville think of himself as befouled by listening to language that savoured of street rowdies and low brawls. Emmeline saw with concern his weary expression, and asked him how he had succeeded as salesman. "Pretty well," he

answered, commenced talking on another subject, and as soon as possible, made his escape to his own room. The next day, and for several following days, Melville felt that he was still under the supervision of Mr. Price; not only that the partner gave directions, but that he watched to see whether they were carried out, and how the inexperienced salesman treated customers. This espionage was very irksome to Melville, especially as he suspected that he did not meet the approval of the observer. It galled the independent youth to realise that he was under the orders of a man who, though the possessor of business talent and energy, was refined neither by nature or education, judging him by the words that came out of his mouth.

Warren, on the other hand, was all life and exhilaration; troubled by no diffidence, he had speedily made himself quite at ease. Though not profane himself, from motives of expediency, rather than from principle, a few oaths more or less did not disturb his composure.

"Yes, it is an ungentlemanly habit," he replied to Melville's expression of disgust, "a very ungentlemanly habit. A man never loses anything by being a gentleman, and I think it's strange such smart fellows as Price and young Ketchum should talk the way they do. We shall have to charge it to eccentricity of genius."

"It is a most disagreeable, coarse kind of eccentricity," retorted Melville.

"Yes, that's what I say; it's coarse and rough. I'm so busy it doesn't trouble me so very much. Because the other fellows swear and talk like Bowery boys, that's no reason why we need to; the fact is, it don't pay. I wouldn't get a trick of swearing for a good deal. When a fellow does, he blurts out sometimes when he don't mean to, where there are ladies maybe. Ladies don't like swearing, and then he must feel pretty sheepish."

Again and again Melville reflected on his uncomfortable situation at Ketchum, Price and Ketchums, more than once meditated giving it up, but he had insisted upon taking it in opposition to the wishes of his best friends. Was he so soon to acknowledge that he had been wrong? That was more than his pride would allow him to do, so he indulged his pride and outraged his self-respect by allowing himself to hear every day language that disgusted him. Not only this, but he was frequently witness to transactions in which goods were grossly misrepresented, and the unwary made to suffer for their credulity. Influenced by the atmosphere of the store, he was acquiring the habit of thinking that it was the buyer's duty to understand and judge of the fabrics displayed; the vender's duty to sell, if he possibly could, without telling a direct falsehood. But this concession to the spirit of the concern did not satisfy Mr. Price.

"Price has got his eye on your sucking dove,

Brigham," said one of Ketchum, Price and Ketchum's salesmen to our old acquaintance, Warren.

"My sucking dove! Who might that be?"

"Wadsworth, the fellow that came when you did. Price will ruffle his feathers for him before long."

"That ain't my look out."

"No, nor mine either, only I wish Price would give notice when the performance is coming off."

"What do you care?"

"Nothing, only I'd like to see Wadsworth taken down some; he thinks he's a mighty sight better than the rest of the world because his father left him a thousand or two."

"It isn't so, Humphrey; he is the last fellow to stick up his back on account of money. He never did at Brainerd's."

"He was boy there, wasn't he? He has got up a peg now, and thinks he can afford to be extraordinary."

"I tell you he isn't extraordinary."

"What makes him so glum then?"

"If you will have it, he don't like the blackguard way you have of swearing. He isn't used to it."

"Oh-h! he's got a parson for a brother-in-law; he'll hear some tall swearing if he stays here long; he'll get seasoned. Anyhow, I can see that Price don't take to him, and of all the men to give a good round blowing up, Price is the greatest when he gets fairly started."

Our readers will please understand that in reporting conversations held in Ketchum, Price and Ketchum's store we expurgate. Oaths may make printed conversations more graphic and "spicy," but the spice is neither pleasant or healthful. As soon would a good cook overcome want of savour by tainted flavour as the author, who has the fear of God before his eyes, relieve the dulness of his narrative by coarse or profane expletives.

Mr. Price soon "got started." Nearly all the purchases of stock were made by the younger Ketchum, but the second partner often found fault with them, and hinted that the requisite shrewdness was not displayed; that were he (Price) to go into the market, the buying would be done more advantageously. The opportunity was given by the temporary absence of Mr. Salmon Ketchum. Mr. Price attended an auction, and bought by sample some cases of broadcloths, at what he thought a low price. The goods came into the store, and one of the cases was opened in the presence of the purchaser. Mr. Ketchum was sent for, and Mr. Price expatiated on the quality of the cloths, their cheapness, &c. The quick eye of the senior partner detected a small paper-like roll in one of the folds; he took up a single thickness of the cloth, and holding it up between his eyes and the light, uttered a "Humph!" laid it down and said, "Price, you've got caught, better get rid of that stock in trade as soon as possible," and turned on his heel.

Mr. Price fairly gnashed his teeth in anger as he examined piece after piece, and assured himself that he had indeed been caught; that he had bought moth-eaten goods at two-thirds their cost, but at twice their real value. Mr. Price was morbidly sensitive to ridicule, and determined not to return the goods to be sold again at the auction room, lest the story should come to the ears of other dealers, and determined also not to incur the rallying of his partners by allowing the goods to be disposed of at a loss. Some of the damaged goods were placed in the department where Melville was stationed, and the young men were instructed to do their best to "shove them off."

"What is the matter with those goods?" asked one when Mr. Price was out of hearing.

"I didn't know there was anything out of the way," answered another.

"You been in this store a year and don't know there is something to pay when Price tells you to 'shove things off?' Besides, Price's mad enough to bite a fellow's head off—better look out for him."

The young man who had first spoken cautiously turned the goods over, keeping a watch all the while for Mr. Price, discovered the defects which were not apparent to the casual observer, and chucklingly informed his associate that "Price had made a bad trade, no wonder he was mad; it always made him raving to be come up with;" and added, that "the boy who wanted to make capital with him had better

help to get those cloths out of sight." An hour later Melville was occupied with a country dealer who often bought of the youth's former employer. Mr. Price was not far off, talking with a city retailer. The wholesale merchant had the faculty of carrying on a conversation, apparently giving it his full attention, while he was at the same time listening to what was said around him.

"I'm thinking of keeping broadcloths," said the country trader. "I don't know much about the goods myself."

"Fool to tell of it!" thought Mr. Price.

"How are these?" Melville's customer went on, fingering a piece of the damaged goods. "That feels like a good cloth."

"We can sell you those cheap," said Melville, naming the price.

"Good make?"

"Yes, I think so, a very good make."

"How can you afford to sell them so cheap?"

"Our Mr. Price bought a lot very low."

"He's coming on; he'll make a salesman after all!" thought Mr. Price.

"They are all right, are they?" asked the trader, mindful of some former "great bargains."

"All right?"

"Yes, all right; no damage about them anyway. If you say they are all right I'll take a piece, but I depend upon what you say. I have a great deal of

confidence in Mr. Brainerd's boys. You say there is no damage about 'em, so they're sold cheap?"

Melville had already gone as far as his conscience would allow—farther, in fact, than he could go with a clear conscience; and though he was aware that Mr. Price as well as the customer was waiting for his answer, would not tell the falsehood that was expected of him. "I did not say that," he replied.

"Oh, well, if they are not all right I don't want 'em at any price; because you know when you first begin to keep a thing you want it good of its kind," and the rural trader went to look for a perfect article elsewhere.

Mr. Price cast on Melville a glance of anger and contempt, was more than usually violent in his expletives for the remainder of the day, but restrained himself sufficiently to wait till there were no outsiders present before he poured out his wrath; then in the coarsest terms he reproached the young salesman with disobedience to orders, and lack of interest and knowledge of business. Melville took the reproof silently, but with utter scorn and disgust for the reprover.

We hear of a "pride that apes humility," but we often see a pride that demands humiliation as its pabulum. Melville began to ask himself if his pride was not requiring too much humiliation—if he could remain where so foul-mouthed a man was his master, and retain any self-respect.

"Nice youth, that Wadsworth!" said Mr. Price to Mr. Ketchum.

"Yes."

"Yes? He is either a simpleton or a mule."

"I have liked him as far as I have seen him."

"I haven't liked him at all, and I've seen a good deal of him—more than I want to. He flew right in my face this morning. I told him to shove off some goods just as fast as possible; he had a chance, and just flung it right down."

"What did he do that for? Some of your cloth, was it?"

"He was asked if they were damaged."

"And he wouldn't say they were not?"

"No, for all he knew I was close by, hearing everything."

"Plucky, ain't he?"

"Ugly, I say. If I had told Brigham to give anything an extra shove, you wouldn't have caught him knowing anything about damage; and if a customer had suspected anything of the sort, he would have talked him out of it."

"He *is* a plausible chap."

"Plausible? I think he is; he stuffs up the country shopkeepers with the most antiquated things, makes them think they are getting the latest fashions—something that has just come over. He is worth his salary, if it was only for the old stock he gets off. All the use I can see to Wadsworth is to drive custom away."

"Who did you say it was that was looking at the cloth?"

"Fairfield, of Brightville."

"He was the man that bought that small lot of gloves we had such a fuss about a while ago."

"That's the man."

"Well, as far as I know, he hasn't been into the store since till to-day."

"That's no reason why we shouldn't make something out of him when he does come."

"Price, you're a pretty smart fellow, but I can tell you you're rather shallow in your smartness. I've heard merchants say they always made all they could out of a man the first time they saw him for fear they should never get another chance. That ain't my theory. My idea is, if you want to keep a run of custom, you don't want to take all the skin off a man the first time. Now that Brigham is as smart as a steel-trap, and there is a certain class of customers that think they know a trap when they see it and can look out. Then there is another set that don't know a trap half the time when they are caught in it. Brigham is the man for either of them. Most all our boys understand them pretty well. But there is another set that cry out that they are shaved, and make a great rumpus if you drive a tolerably sharp bargain, and if you lather them down and make a pretty close shave, you don't see them again for one while, if you do at all. Those kind of men want one

of your over-honest fellows that opens his eyes like an owl and looks 'em right in the face; if he tells 'em once in a while not to take the goods they are looking at, they won't wash, or wear, or something or other, all the better."

"Wadsworth is the man for that; that's what he is here for, is it?"

"You'll do pretty well, Price, but you haven't learnt out in human nature. Look here!" and Mr. Ketchum turned over the leaves of the day-book and showed a memorandum of sales to Mr. Fairfield, of Brightville.

"What? The man went out of the store without buying at all."

"I know that, but he came back while you were gone to dinner, and bought of Wadsworth too. I heard him telling Wadsworth a long story about his father dealing with Wadsworth's father, and about his liking to buy of Brainerd, because he knew that his goods would turn out in his customers' hands just what he represented them, and all that sort of thing. 'I like to buy of a man I can feel confidence in,' says he. So you see, Price, what sold that bill of goods," tapping the leaf of the account-book with his pencil, "and what secures Fairfield as a customer as long as Wadsworth stays with us, for you know we can afford to undersell Brainerd."

"Fairfield is only one; we can't afford to keep a salesman on purpose for him."

"Fairfield is only one," replied Mr. Ketchum with some impatience, "but there are more like him. Wadsworth, if he is young, gives us just the element we needed. We have got up a name for being enterprising, go-ahead, wide-awake, but there are some people that are afraid of us. One man says, 'What do you pay for so-and-so?' 'I paid so much.' 'You did? I pay more than that for mine; where do you buy?' 'At Ketchum, Price and Ketchum's.' 'Oh, you go there. Fact is, I'm afraid of 'em; they are keen, ain't they? I got shaved there once.' 'Yes, keen as razors; but you can buy cheaper there than you can anywhere else, and they have got one salesman that will tell you just what his goods are; you can trust him, he's as honest as the sun, and his father was before him.'"

"Oh, then Wadsworth is here to do the honesty," sneered Mr. Price, "and we are all a pack of knaves."

"Price," said the senior partner, "you go to church sometimes. What do you go for? Not because you like it, I'll be bound."

"No, it's a bore, but it gives a man a sort of respectability to have a pew in a stylish church, and be seen there once in a while; helps his business standing."

"Yes, precisely, and it helps our business respectability to have the over-honest son of an over-honest father in our employ. I don't see why we shouldn't make all the capital we can out of him,"

"Well, I see you are determined to keep him, but I confess I think the firm can take care of its own respectability and honesty without getting such a downy-cheeked youth as Wadsworth to uphold it."

"Price," exclaimed Mr. Ketchum, taking up his hat and brushing it with the sleeve of his coat, "you're smart, maybe, but you don't look an inch before your nose. Can't you see that the man who won't overreach his customers won't try to overreach his employers? I tell you it is a good deal easier nowadays to find such a young man as Brigham, though I grant you he is very efficient, than it is a really incorruptible fellow like Wadsworth. If you take my advice you will let him alone, and not interfere with his scruples."

"I don't believe in your really incorruptible fellows; they all take their chance when one good enough comes along," said Mr. Price, but he saw that his senior partner meant to have his way in the matter, and he had the best of reasons for not opposing him too far.

Melville went home smarting under Mr. Price's reproof. He had uttered no word of remonstrance, but the smothered fire of his indignation burned all the more fiercely, and he went to the store the next morning decided to see Mr. Ketchum before taking his place again under the espial of Mr. Price. The senior partner was in the counting-room when the young man reached the store, for of all connected

with the establishment there was not a more unflagging worker than the head of the house.

Mr. Ketchum looked with well-concealed admiration at the youth who claimed his attention. His figure was tall and well-developed; his black hair was crisp enough to wave over his full, high forehead; his cheeks were tinged with health and the excitement of the moment, and his clear, black eyes looked straight into the restless orbs of the keen merchant. Mr. Ketchum remembered the little clamourer who, a half hour since, had clung to his father's coat, claiming the goodbye kiss from his "dear, dear papa," and the money-maker thought that if he could anticipate the portrait of his own son just growing into manhood, he would draw it very like the youth before him. Well had it been for Melville had the touch of little fingers been less recently upon the neck of this gold worshipper.

"Good-morning, Wadsworth, you are early."

"Yes sir, I wanted to see you and ask you how soon you could fill my place."

"To-day, if you wish us to, no doubt. Why do you ask?"

"I engaged with you, and I thought I would resign to you." "Tired of business?"

"No sir. I shall look for another situation."

"Then why not stay with us?"

"Mr. Price is not satisfied with me, and told me so. I don't need a man to tell me that a second time."

"Mr. Price is excitable, and I think," said Mr. Ketchum smiling, "that Wadsworth is excitable too. I should be the last man to urge any one to remain in our employ against his own preference; we can fill up the ranks faster than they thin out, but I say to *you* frankly, I think you are acting hastily."

"Perhaps you wouldn't think so if you had heard what Mr. Price said."

"Well, go to your station, Wadsworth, take hold of your work with a will, and I don't think there will be any further friction with Mr. Price. If a week hence you wish to leave us let me know."

Melville felt that he was dismissed from "the pretence," but he was no coward, and was determined to "define his position."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Ketchum," said he, "but I can't say goods are perfect when they are not."

"We don't want you to. We don't want you to do anything against your conscience, Wadsworth."

With a better opinion of his principal than he had ever had before, and with his scruples lulled, Melville did "take hold of his work" with new energy. Mr. Price was too busy a man to spend his time or thoughts in keeping alive a petty spite; though he disliked Melville, he considered him "a pet of Ketchum's," one for whom the senior partner was responsible, and ceased to give him his especial attention.

Warren heard from Melville the account of Mr.

Price's fault finding, and of the interview with Mr. Ketchum, and repeated it with embellishments. Melville gained the credit of being the fellow who had the courage "to tell Old Ketchum" that "he wouldn't stand Price's blowing up, and wouldn't tell his lies for him either."

Congratulating himself that he had taken a stand for the right, and that he was morally superior to those around him, Melville nourished his pride, applied the plaster of self-righteousness to his wounded conscience, and thought he could constantly come in contact with pitch and not be defiled.

CHAPTER XIV.

MATRIMONIAL AND POLITICAL.

SYDNEY CARLISLE was not the man to give himself up to useless regrets, or to whine because he was not duly appreciated. His heart was not made of that flimsy material that expands under a lady's smiles, and cracks by congealation when the smile is withdrawn. His indignation at being considered a fortune-hunter was overshadowed by his devotion to science. He saw Professor Buffum to the finish of his last volume on *The Mountains and Hills of New England*, and then joined the corps of geological sur-

veyors to which he had been appointed. Close companionship with sturdy men, and contact with nature in its sterner manifestations, dissipated all traces of morbid sensibility.

When, years later, he returned to Dartfield and saw Agnes and Bessie Banister together, the quiet, restful manner of the former betokening the character growing more and more elevated, contrasted strongly with the vivacity of the latter. He looked upon Agnes as one too good for him, but was strongly attracted by the mirthful Bessie. Miss Carlisle groaned inwardly as she watched her brother's eyes following Bessie flitting about a crowded room, scattering broadcast witty jests and quick retorts. The sister even went so far as to hint to Agnes that it had been in her power to save a sensible young man from being taken in by a madcap girl. Agnes having become accustomed to the teacher's dictatorial ways, bore with them for the sake of redeeming traits, and did not say, as she thought, that it was no part of a friend's duty to save brothers by the holdfast matrimonial from succumbing to bright eyes and fascinating manners.

Notwithstanding Miss Carlisle's counter opinions, Sydney persisted in being captivated by Bessie, and was rash enough to communicate the fact to his charmer. Her jollity vanished on the instant. Here was one of the gravest questions that could come up to be disposed of, and putting on her most serious

look, she asserted that she could not decide so important a matter without deep reflection and consulting friends.

The friend she most wished to consult was Agnes Wadsworth, for Bessie had not forgotten that there had been rumours of an engagement between Agnes and the suitor. "If he had been mean, or flirting with Agnes, he shall march double quick," she resolved, but added, "I don't believe he has. I believe he is real good and noble; everybody likes him, and I had hard work not to tell him I liked him too; but I sha'n't let Doctor Anstace tie the man-and-wife-knot, and then find out afterwards that Aggie was keeping something to herself. I should twitch at the knot awfully, and I couldn't pull it apart. Better know what I am about before the knot is tied." So in the affair in which young ladies who claim the credit of possessing discretion and judgment, often allow themselves to be guided by "the blindfold boy," this "madcap girl" gave reason and common sense voice.

Of all Agnes' friends and acquaintances, Bessie was one of the few who had not tried to gratify curiosity in Agnes Wadsworth and Sydney Carlisle, and when questioned by some who thought they might gain from the friend information which they could not extort from the young lady herself, Bessie answered that she knew nothing about it, that she had never heard that the parties were engaged; at any rate, if

Aggie had any secrets she wished to tell, she would tell them, she, Bessie, did not pry into the affairs of any of her friends. But when Sydney Carlisle became more than a mere acquaintance to Bessie, she determined to look into the matter. Her mind full of romantic thoughts, she went to her friend's house to find her busy in the prosaic employment of jacket-mending. "Why don't you get new clothes? I would not mend the old ones," she said.

"This was new last week. Brownie thinks it must have been poor cloth, because it wouldn't bear his weight on a picket fence."

"Why not let Jane mend for him?"

"I did, but he said the other boys laughed at him, and called him 'Old Virginny,' because her mending looks like a Virginia fence. He isn't willing to wear any mending but mine; that will hardly show at all when it is pressed."

"You make a slave of yourself to that boy."

"Oh, no, the chains are very light, dear little fellow."

"Well, now, put down that jacket and look me right in the face," said Bessie, taking the obnoxious garment from the mender's hand, laying it out of her reach, and sitting down directly opposite.

"What's coming now?" asked Agnes laughing.

"Was Sydney Carlisle ever your lover?"

"Sydney Carlisle was never my lover," answered Agnes, returning the earnest gaze, and trying to look serious.

"Was he ever shabby to you?"

"He was never shabby to me."

"Oh, I'm so glad?" said Bessie, giving a long drawn sigh of relief, and springing up. Agnes rose too, and putting her arm round Bessie's neck said, "I never heard or saw anything from or of Sydney Carlisle that would give me the slightest occasion to think he is not a gentleman in every sense of the word. He has never been my lover; but if he is yours, dear Bessie, I wish you all happiness. Can I say more?"

"Yes-s, Aggie, if you don't mind telling me how that story that you were engaged came to be told."

"Gossip, Bessie, meddlesome gossip; nothing more. He came here often, so we were to be married, of course. I never thought of the thing till the boys brought the story home from school; then I saw what I never had before, that if he came here every day I could not do for my brothers what I, standing by my father's open grave, prayed my heavenly Father to permit me to do, keep for them a happy home when they are here, and 'a light in the window' when they are away."

"I wish I was half as good as you, Aggie. Then Sydney might have been a lover of yours, only you took it in time, same as we vaccinate."

"What a girl to go 'from grave to gay!'" said Agnes. "No, I did not say that Sydney might have been my lover. Mind the difference, Bessie, dear."

"Well, Aggie, I'm ever so much obliged to you for

taking it in time, for where would poor I have been?" said Bessie, making a doleful face.

"You are yourself again!" said Agnes. "I was afraid when you came in you had met with some serious trouble."

"Wouldn't it have been serious if I hadn't taken it in time, and had got to nip my young affections in the bud?"

When Bessie became Mrs. Carlisle, she found Sydney a most attentive spouse, except when she proposed to go to the Wadsworth mansion; then he was very busy, or did not wish to make calls that day, made one excuse and another. By dint of persevering coaxing she discovered the reason, and she succeeded in convincing the "mercenary wretch" of his mistake, so that he visited at the house as freely and with as much pleasure as she did herself.

Rufus and Stanley passed through their college course creditably. Rufus commenced the study of the law in the metropolis, but made the homestead his residence. He was promoted from haranguing boys from a barrel-head to addressing his fellow-citizens from the rostrum of the school-house, where the town-meetings were held. His plain, common-sense views of town affairs were stated with just enough of classical allusion and reference to old Roman laws and customs, to convince the hard-handed farmers from the outskirts of the town that the speaker was "a larnt youngster," and his dis-

crimination in the advocacy of improvements led the denizens of the village to be confident that he was one who would keep up with the times, but he imposed upon by no "new-fangled humbugs."

He was duly admitted to the bar; and when soon after the two prominent parties were about to nominate candidates for State representatives, he was waited upon, at his city office, by a committee of those who were commissioned to ask that he would allow his name to be placed on the ticket of the party to which they adhered, and that he would be their candidate for a seat in the House of Representatives. Squire Talford, who had frequently had the honour of being "the gentleman from Dartfield," and who had declined being a candidate after he had learned that a younger and more popular man was thought more available, and consequently would be the nominee, supposed that "they could depend upon Mr. Wadsworth to advocate the views of the party which would be proud to put him in office." Mr. Trader had no doubt that "Mr. Wadsworth would push the charter of the projected steam-mill, in which he, Mr. Trader, and many other of the townspeople were interested, and which would undoubtedly be such an advantage to the place, increasing the value of taxable property, and so forth." Mr. Farmer put his hat on the floor, smoothed down his grey locks, and said, he "told the squire, before they came, the only fault he had to find with Mr. Wadsworth was that he was rather young,

but the squire said he would give him the benefit of his advice and experience."

"The old dotard!" thought Squire Talford, "what did he want to tell of that for? I told Mr. Wire Puller if we took him along he would make some tremendous blunder; but he said he must come, for whichever way he went, half the voters in his neighbourhood would go." No wonder the gentleman was vexed. He had been sadly galled that he had been obliged to stand aside for the boy whom he remembered in the flowing robes of infancy, after the squire himself had donned the barrister's gown, and had consented to the nomination with the hope that a "juvenile," new to political life and office, would be easily controlled by "an old hand."

Mr. Wire Puller and others penetrated the motives of the habitue of legislative halls, and laughed as they asked one another if the squire had not seen enough of the world to know that an old horse, used to the harness and the thills, would mind the bit quicker than a colt harnessed for the first time?

Rufus, good-natured, and not troubled with irritability, allowed the different members of the committee each to harangue to his heart's content, and meanwhile smilingly studied human nature—a science he thought highly valuable to a man of political aspirations. When each had said his say, and looked to the listener for his decision, he replied. "As for Mr. Farmer's objection, I will only remind him of the

answer made to a similar criticism by a man more illustrious than, I fear, I shall ever be. I mean Jeremy Taylor; when he preached the first time before Laud, Laud was astonished at his sermon, but thought the preacher too young to be the bishop's chaplain; but the youth humbly begged his grace's pardon for that fault, and promised if he lived he would mend it."

The story was told with so modest an air, and finished with so courteous a bow to Mr. Farmer, that the old man's heart was won, and when he went home he told his neighbours that Rufus Wadsworth was a mere boy, to be sure, but he was a growing boy, and no fool. Having disarmed Mr. Farmer, Rufus went on to state that if he went to the Legislature, he should prefer to go as the nominee of his townsmen rather than of a party; that he could not foresee all the measures that might come up, and therefore could not say what his course might be, but that he should be happy to unfold his views to the voters of Dartfield on any evening that would be most convenient to them. This statement was not given on the spur of the moment, for Rufus had received repeated hints that he might expect a call from "a committee of citizens," and his reply was prepared.

The committee retired, Mr. Farmer only quite satisfied. Squire Talford and Mr. Trader were chafed that the candidate had not shown more inclination to be supple in their hands, but consoled themselves with the thought that "the independent dodge" took

best with some men, and Rufus could not be so ungrateful as to turn his back on those who had put him in office.

The evening was appointed, and if there was an individual within the precincts of the town who did not know that Rufus Wadsworth, Esq., would address his fellow-citizens at the given time, it was because the said individual did not step over his own threshold, look out of his own window, or hold any intercourse with the world beyond his own hearthstone, for the fact was announced from trees, fences, pumps, and barns; from stone walls and wooden posts; from superannuated carts by the roadside, and lively trader's waggons dashing by; in grocery stores and mechanics' shops; in every available place where paste could be made to stick or tacks to hold. The old party leaders had worked with zeal and skill, and all male Dartfield resolved to go and hear their townsman give his ideas of politics.

Even-tempered and careless as a boy all his school-fellows liked him, while they laughed at his mistakes, and many of those who had arrived at the dignity of a ballot would have thrown it for Rufus Wadsworth, Esq., because they knew that Rufus Wadsworth, the lad, was whole-hearted and straightforward, but they "would just go and hear him talk." Older men thought they detected much of the father, whom they respected in the son, as he came to manly years and powers; they wished to learn his political status, that

they might, if possible, give him their suffrages. Not a few went because they had heard it whispered that Wadsworth had told "that old party hack Squire Talford," that he would go into the legislature untrammelled. Whatever the particular impulses were that sent one and another to the hall that evening, it was crowded.

The young orator was introduced by Squire Talford as a gentleman who was no stranger to the people of Dartfield, and who needed no commendation, but could and would speak for himself. The subjects on which he spoke were, kind reader, of local or now obsolete interest; we will not stop to hear his address, but at its close accompany his brother Stanley home, where Agnes impatiently awaited him. Brother and sister met in the entry.

"Well, Stanley?"

"Splendid, Agnes! Couldn't have been better." Stanley was rather extravagant in his language sometimes.

"Take your overcoat off, do Stanley, and come in and tell me all about it."

"Why, staid, sober Aggie, you are excited," said Stanley, following his sister into the sitting-room. "I came home just as quick as I could, for I knew you would want to hear; it seemed as if everybody was determined to stop me though, and shake hands, and tell me how proud I must be of my brother, and you would have been proud of him, Aggie. What a

pity you couldn't go. I wish Carver could have heard him; he's a judge of public speaking."

"Wasn't he excited, embarrassed?"

"I was afraid he might be; he has never spoken to so large an audience before, except at Commencement, and nearly all the people there were strangers; this evening he was speaking to people he has always known. I should think it would be far more embarrassing to speak to such an audience than to one two or three times as large, but whose faces are unfamiliar."

"Yes, it would be so to me, but Ruf. didn't mind it at all. The fact is, he worked tremendously in college, and kept up in politics all the time too. I don't know how he did it, but I do know he gave me a good deal of information to-night. He just went right at his subjects, talked common sense; and when some fellows in the back of the hall tried to puzzle him and throw him off his balance, he was all ready for them, and they were glad to curl down into their seats and keep still."

"Who would have thought that Rufus would make a good public speaker."

"He has been looking to this, and what is to follow, for the last six years, and he has an easy friendly way that is very attractive. No one could have heard him to-night without being convinced that he meant just what he said. He didn't approve party measure straight through, as your demagogue does. He told

why he liked one thing, and why he didn't like another; and some of the time I couldn't see how he kept 'the thread of his discourse,' he was applauded so much. I wish you could have seen Doctor Anstace clap; you may be sure there has been something pretty good said when he applauds at a political meeting."

Rufus came in not over-elated by his popularity, and answered his brother's congratulations.

"Yes, Stan., I suppose I did pretty well; everybody said I did. You know, old fellow, if I did, the credit ought to be half yours."

"Mine? I don't see how."

"I can tell you how. I always was a blundering fellow, and when I first began to string words together so as to make a speech, they would run about as smoothly as a cobble-stone pavement with a plenty of crossings set higher than regular level. Do you remember my first speech at the society meeting? How you did pull it to pieces and lecture me for saying Ah-h-h, Er-r-r, to fill the gaps when the ideas didn't march up fast enough, and how I did cringe at some of your criticisms; but I was thoroughly in earnest, Stan., and I saw you were right when you told me not to talk till I had put my thoughts into shape, and found words that would express them, and not grind against each other. You trained my ear. I never shall be a poet; but if I make a tolerable speaker, it will be because I have a brother that is a poet."

"He hasn't proved that yet."

"All in good time, the poetry is there. I think he has given some proof of it. Why don't you go abroad, as father wanted you to; then you'd find inspiration."

"No hurry. I don't like the thoughts of roughing it, as I should have to do if I travelled. If I couldn't go, I suppose I should be desperately anxious to, but as I can go any time, I am waiting for good company, and so forth."

"Aggie, why don't you pack this lazy fellow off? You make him altogether too comfortable here."

Agnes had some fears that her elder brother was correct, but chose to change the subject and asked, "What about the nomination?"

"Oh, that's all right," replied Rufus. "Squire Talford and the others say so."

The nomination was made, the opposing party put up "a man of straw," and Rufus had the satisfaction of knowing that he was really the choice of the constituency he represented,

CHAPTER XV.

THE POET.

"I ACTUALLY begin to feel ashamed of myself," said Stanley, tossing down a paper that contained one of

Rufus' speeches, which the younger brother had been reading to Agnes. "Yes, I am ashamed of myself," he repeated in answer to his sister's inquiring look. "There is Melville working all the time like a cart-horse to make money; or, if he isn't at work, planning what he will do next. There is Rufus, the lazy boy of the family, one of the most active members of the House; and there is Brown, 'even little Brownie,' taking prizes for industry and steady improvement, and I am doing nothing,—absolutely nothing. I am the man who was going to have all the world at my feet doing homage to my talents."

"The fugitive pieces you wrote for the college magazine were very good, I thought," said Agnes.

"They were tolerably pretty effusions—creditable, perhaps, for a sophomore or a boarding-school miss, I should have said, if any one else had written them. They are all well enough while you are reading them, but leave no deep impression. When I was in college, I promised myself that as soon as I was emancipated from professors and tutors, and was back here quiet, and in the midst of all the old home associations, I would electrify the world. Not only that, but that my poetry should cause my name to be cherished by high and low, rich and poor; but what have I done? Nothing, really nothing, but turn over a few books and scribble a few worthless lines."

"Stanley, you have talents if you would only use them,"

"Do you think so, Aggie? I used to, but if I had genius it would show itself."

"How, Stanley? Do you expect to sit down with a ream of paper on your writing-table and a pen in your hand, and have the genius flow from the nib?"

"You are hard upon me, Agnes."

"I would rather have you think so, than see you waste your talents."

"You are disappointed in me, sister mine?"

"No, I am not disappointed in you, for you have not put yourself to the test yet. A miner is not disappointed when he has only turned over a few spade-fuls of the surface soil. What would you say to the man who saw every indication of the rich ore deeper down, but who stood leaning on his spade, discouraged because the first hour's labour brought to light only a few grains here and there?"

"I would say, 'Rouse yourself, idler! put to your strength!'" answered Stanley, starting up from the sofa on which he had been lolling. "Give me a subject, Aggie."

The sister took up a Bible, and after turning over the leaves a moment, placed the book open in her brother's hand, at the same time pointing to the account of one of those scenes in domestic life, when Jesus of Nazareth passing by caused weeping mourners to rejoice. Stanley took the sacred volume, and without another word disappeared.

When he was gone, Agnes half wished she could

recall the words she had spoken. Never idle herself, an industrious person, first from conscience and necessity, later from habit as well as conscience, it had troubled her beyond measure to see Stanley lead the life of a mere dawdler, as he had done since he left college. Had he been dull and lacking in intellectual force, she would have been reconciled to the Divine appointment; but she knew that he was neither, for when roused by brilliant conversation and social stimulus, he displayed more than average abilities,—abilities, she thought, that should be used in a less evanescent way.

She saw no more of her brother, except at the table, until evening, then he read aloud to her as usual, but she missed his cheery running comments and criticisms. The next day he went to his study immediately after the morning meal, and stayed there until almost noon; then he came out and proposed a ride, but was, as Agnes thought, still offended. The following morning, when he rose from the breakfast-table, he said, "My monitress set me a task. Will she come and pronounce upon the work?"

Agnes went with her brother to his study; he placed a chair for her at his writing-table and close beside his own, took some sheets of manuscript from a drawer, and laid them so that both could look upon the page. Agnes commenced reading to herself.

"Aloud, my sister, aloud!" he said.

She read audibly. In elegant diction and har-

monious rhythm Stanley had given the simple story, and then had drawn the moral and applied it to the men and women of the day. The sentiments were pure and lofty, yet such as a very child might have understood, and the true poet's genius shone in every line. Agnes read, her brother turning the leaves. When she had pronounced the last word he said: "Why, Aggie! what a reader you are. Fortunate the writer who has you to interpret his thoughts. I fancied there was something in it, but I could not tell."

"'Fancied! could not tell!' O Stanley! never say again you have no genius. No dull plodder has been at work there."

The poem was sent to Mr. Carver, and afterwards appeared in one of the leading religious prints of the time. Other contributions in the same vein and of equal excellence followed; they were eagerly caught up, copied by papers and periodicals, and were scattered broadcast all over the country. Stanley received letters from far and near, written by persons in all grades of society, and in all circumstances, thanking him for words that had given intense pleasure, that had consoled, strengthened, and stimulated to better life.

Encouraged to believe that he could touch the keynote of the human heart, Stanley wrote, always, however, claiming Agnes' approval before he allowed the public to see a line. As time passed, it became the

sister's duty to restrain rather than urge. Stanley was, she saw, living too fast, and though she rejoiced over the influence her brother was wielding, and enjoying the meed of praise he was receiving, she begged him to lay down his pen and give his overwrought brain the repose it claimed; but he pleaded that the life was longest in which most was accomplished, and that he counted his, not by days and years, but by his power for good, and he wrought on.

When Mr. and Mrs. Carlisle were about to visit foreign lands, Sydney having been chosen, his wife said, delegate to the Royal Society of Bone Diggers, Stanley yielded to persuasion, and accompanied his friends abroad. His reputation had crossed the ocean before him. The cards of noble, distinguished and learned men found their way to his table, and the doors of titled ladies opened wide to "the sweet singer" from over the seas. He was soon involved in a round of social enjoyment, was courted by noted men, and flattered by charming women—a state of things hardly conducive to health of body, and far from conducive to vigorous, independent thought.

He became one of the galaxy of minor celebrities of which Lady Nottingham was the centre—men and women of cultivated taste and fancy, but who, if capable of better things, seldom rose above what their own clique pronounced *be-au-ti-ful*.

It was with dismay that Agnes learned that her poet-brother had become one of these triflers, and

with disgust almost, that she read letters from him, published in the paper for which "Jenkins" regularly reported the last assembly, and minutely described the dresses of Miss A—z, Mrs. B—y, and others. "Was Stanley to sink to the level of such chroniclers of frivolity as that?" she asked herself. "Would his talents henceforth find no higher manifestation than that of convincing the world that their possessor was the daily associate of titled 'lotus eaters'?"

CHAPTER XVI.

REAPING.

YEAR after year Melville Wadsworth remained in the employ of Ketchum, Price and Ketchum. His fellow-clerks bestowed upon him the sobriquets of "Deacon" and "Ketchum's darling," ridicule which its object estimated as complimentary rather than disparaging, and he went on pluming himself on his probity, and taking pleasure in the confidence reposed in him by the elder Ketchum, who often called upon him when an unusually reliable messenger was needed.

The subject of undertaking business on their own account was often spoken of by both Melville and Warren Brigham. It was about five years after the former's memorable interview with Mr. Ketchum that the young salesman stated his wish to the merchant.

"Don't be in a hurry, Wadsworth," was the reply ; "if I am not mistaken there is heavy weather coming, when we shall all of us be glad to keep pretty well under the lee-shore."

Melville, who was not quite so confident of the infallibility of his own judgment as he had been while in his minority, followed the advice, and afterwards had good reason to thank the giver. It soon began to be whispered about the store that the firm were taking in sail, that "Old Ketchum" had given orders to refuse credit to concerns that every one else thought good ; that Price didn't like it, but could not help himself. Next came the cry, "Money's tight ; young Ketchum's buying from hand to mouth."

Mr. Ketchum, senior, a careful observer of the business horizon, had discovered the small cloud. The first puffs that prompted less wary men to spread their canvas he took as warnings, and, acting on his instructions, the younger brother refused many tempting bargains that others eagerly snapped up. The puffs became gusts, and heavily laden crafts of light draft were submerged in the rising waves. The gusts strengthened into a gale ; old ships that had weathered the storms of many a rough season reeled and shivered ; their captains grasped the wheels, muttering that they had "never known such a time before," tried to hail consorts, and called for help ; but the consorts were themselves running up signals of distress, their own timbers were strained and their hulls leaking.

Mates and crews staggered at the straining ropes, but the masts went by the board. Ships, once staunch and well-found, refused to obey their helms, and wallowed helpless in the trough of the sea. Other noble crafts were tossed upon the rocks, where they lay grinding their stout timbers splintered and twisted. Captains and crews stood upon the dreary shore and surveyed the destruction; the seamen soon departed to stand ready for new voyages when the storm should abate. But the officers, aged and weather-beaten, stayed by, hoping to land some damaged cargo or drift-wood.

But this could not last for ever; the storm abated, and left here and there a strong craft riding at anchor. Among them was one which bore the name of Ketchum, Price and Ketchum on its stern, thanks to the good seamanship of its commander.

The great financial crisis of 18— was a fearful time. Men hurried about the business streets with knotted brows and compressed lips; again and again were the questions asked, “Who has gone now?” “Is there a single firm that is safe?” Men, who in the morning could draw their checks for tens of thousands, were sheltered at night by roofs that were the property of their creditors.

Two years passed away, and once more Melville expressed his gratitude to his astute employer, and asked how he read the signs then. “I think the chance is good,” he answered. “All the shaky con-

cerns are out of the way, the thunder has cleared the sky, things are settling down again. I don't like to advise, it is thankless work; but I have not seen so good a chance for a young man to start in business, no, not these ten years!"

When Melville told Warren of his intention, his reply was, "That's just what I've been thinking of, and what's more, I think we'd make a first-rate firm, Wadsworth and Brigham. I'm a little older than you, but I suppose you can put in the most capital, so we won't stand for age."

"Wadsworth and Brigham," said Melville.

"Yes; don't sound badly, does it? I can put in something—all I have."

"That friend of yours who died last month was sensible enough to leave you something, was he? You said you wished he would."

"He didn't—hadn't gumption enough. No, all I have is my own hard earning."

"I don't see how you have managed to hold on to much of your earnings. I thought you told me that your father didn't do anything for you after the first year you was in town."

"He didn't; but I've managed to save a pretty penny for all that. You see the other fellows are going here and there, to one sort and another, and hiring stable-horses to ride Sundays; but I've never paid a stable-keeper a copper since I've been in the city. I went to the opera just once last winter. I

shouldn't have done that, but everybody was talking about Signora Grandvocini, and asking, 'Hadn't I heard her?' and I thought it didn't pay to be so green."

"I always knew you was a steady fellow."

"Steady as the town-clock when the wind don't blow. Then my tailor's bill isn't more than half what most of our fellows pay."

"You don't look shabby."

"Diligent use of the clothes-brush, my boy. It's hard enough to pinch; but do you see that block?"

"I'm not stone blind. I can see a block of granite stores when they are close to my elbow," answered Melville laughing.

"Well, you know that's owned by the Romney trustees; and that isn't the only piece of real estate they own, not by a long shot. Old Romney came to the city a poor boy, and he told my father, years and years ago, that it was harder to make the first five hundred dollars than all the rest of his fortune. I've thought of that many a time when I've brushed the old coat, or stayed at home from some place I wanted to go to tremendously. Another thirty or another one to go towards the five hundred! 'Courage, my boy!' I'd say, 'you'll be a rich man yet!' I got the five hundred long ago. I've been putting more to it, and it is three thousand now."

"I don't see how you have done it. You're a thrifty fellow, Warren."

"Thrifty young fellows get to be wealthy old fellows," was the reply.

Melville knew that Warren was careful in his expenditures, but was not prepared for such a summing up of economies; he contrasted his friend with other young men of his acquaintance, who, though receiving salaries fully equal to Warren's, were always complaining of poverty. In Warren surely were united many requisites of a desirable business partner—thrift, industry, good temper, experience—these were qualities that it could hardly be expected would all be found in another; besides, Warren was an old friend. Melville did not recall in all his acquaintance a young man with whom daily association would be more agreeable. The one great lack in his character, his want of straightforwardness, was lightly passed over; no doubt he would sometimes resort to means to close a bargain that Melville himself would not employ, but in that respect he was no worse than thousands of others; whether business could be successfully transacted "in these days and everything be done exactly on the square," Melville doubted. If he was to have a partner, Warren was the man. That a firm had many advantages over an individual working alone was undoubtedly true, for sundry reasons that were passed under review, and the conclusion was reached that the firm of Wadsworth and Brigham should be an actuality.

Mr. Ketchum, senior, cheerfully gave his counsel,

which was invaluable to the young men. Mr. Price grumbled to the younger Ketchum, and said that the senior partner had taken such a fancy to Wadsworth that he was even putting him up to starting an opposition. Mr. Salmon Ketchum answered, that he thought the firm of Ketchum, Price and Ketchum could stand an opposition like that, especially as his brother would keep his eye on it, and as the old firm were pushing out pretty fast, and had been since the crash. The firm *was* pushing out, adding one new branch after another, till it seemed as if they would not leave out a single article or mode of dealing that could possibly be included in the dry goods trade.

One piece of advice that Mr. Ketchum gave Melville was to do a strictly cash business, to neither give or take credit. This course did not please Warren, who argued that a credit business could be safely done by shrewd men, and that by it the profits might be doubled and trebled; he, moreover, hinted that in volunteering this counsel the wily merchant was consulting his own interests rather than the prosperity of the new firm. But Melville had so often had reason to approve Mr. Ketchum's caution that had at first appeared needless, that he was decided, and Warren was obliged to acquiesce, and later to acknowledge, that the established mercantile man was not jealous of the beginners, for to him were they often indebted for hints as to the present and prospective state of the market, saleable and unsaleable goods, and moreover

he never contradicted the report that "Wadsworth and Brigham were backed up by Ketchum, Price and Ketchum," a report that was of great advantage to the young men.

Mr. Ketchum's most intimate business acquaintances were surprised at the course of the grasping money-maker, and the merchant half wondered why he did for Wadsworth what he never had done and would not do for any other young man. Had this able financier, this piler of thousands on thousands given himself time to analyse his own motives, he would have discovered that Melville Wadsworth, full of life and hope, was connected in his mind with his own son, a handsome, wilful boy of nine years.

Wadsworth and Brigham had been in business together three years, and were reckoned among the well-established firms. It was a cold winter evening, and Mr. Price's house in Stylish Street was a blaze of light, for Mrs. Price was giving a party, and Miss Price was coming out. We would not intimate that Mr. Price's eldest daughter had always been in until she had reached the ripe age of seventeen, for had she not been seen for the last five years on the fashionable drives, seated beside her mother in her father's carriage on almost every day when people "who were anybody" were in town? When the sleighing carnival was at its height, had it not been more than once chronicled by untiring and veracious reporters, that Mrs. Oliver Price and her lovely daughter were

skimming over the road behind Mr. Price's unrivalled greys? At the opera was not Miss Price often seen displaying a white cloak, and a bonnet of delicate tint and filmy material? And whenever one of Mrs. Price's acquaintances received a few friends was not Miss Price, in elaborately simple toilet, one of the guests? But when one of the said acquaintances gave a large party Miss Price was not present; she was supposed to be a young lady whose time was so absorbed by school, by musicmasters, by teachers of Terpsichorean art, so devoted, in short, to preparation for the grave duties of life, that she could not join in its amusements.

She had not come out, but she was to come out; she did come out arrayed in costly fabrics, selected after a consultation with Madame Contumez, who reflected deeply on Miss Price's complexion, style of beauty, &c., and who supplemented the material by the "cream" of her own last Paris importation. We had some doubt, critical reader, as to the propriety of asserting that any part of a young lady's habiliments consisted of that toothsome richness, cream, but the phrase was madame's, and judging by its frequent use, when the lady was conferring with her customers, a very abundant cream must have risen on her own importations, and much of her time must have been consumed in the skimming.

But to leave dairy references and return to Miss Price's coming out. Warren Brigham and Melville

Wadsworth were each honoured by invitations. Melville would have returned that polite subterfuge, "regrets," for he had never thrown off his feeling of superiority to Mr. Price, whom he regarded as a piece of base metal gilded. Warren, however, protested that on account of their business relations with the father, and lest he might think that his former employee harboured an old grudge, both the partners must go, and Melville yielded, and instead of the subterfuge "regrets" despatched the greater subterfuge "accepts with pleasure."

Mrs. Price was in her element on the august occasion, for she enjoyed dispensing the hospitalities of her elegant house. Mr. Price was out of place, and wondered why white gloves always made a man's hands so large, and such encumbrances, for the master of the dwelling seldom accompanied his lady when she went into society, and he looked upon the annual wiping out of the score of social indebtedness as an inevitable infliction.

Warren had rubbed off his awkwardness by occasional glimpses of festive life, and moved about in the gay throng as if he had been a frequenter of like assemblies from babyhood. He was repeatedly at the side of the young lady for whom ostensibly this array of gorgeous dresses and of gaslights had been brought in proximity. Again and again did he assure Melville that Clara Price was "lovely, the prettiest girl in the room." Melville was less at his ease, and was

so ungentlemanly as to tell Warren it was "astonishing that any man could think such a specimen of dough-bake was pretty." At the same time he mentally contrasted her with his sisters when at the same age.

Thus commenced Warren Brigham's acquaintance with Clara Price, a commencement that he followed up by frequent calls. Mrs. Price, who had set her heart upon her daughter's marrying into one of the old families, did not think him a welcome visitant, and wished her husband to give the young man a hint of the fact.

"Suppose he does come often, where is the harm?" asked the father.

"The harm? That's just like you men. Why, Clara will be falling in love with him, and we shall be the cruel papa and mamma."

"Suppose she does fall in love with him, where is the harm, and why should we be the cruel?"——

Mrs. Price sighed impatiently and exclaimed, "You surely do not want her to marry him?"

"Where's the harm? Brigham is an enterprising man, doing a good business, and in a fair way to make money."

To all the mother's remonstrances the father answered, "Where's the harm?" but she did not leave Warren in ignorance of her sentiments. He, secure in the favour of the master of the mansion, and in that of the daughter, cared little for Mrs. Price's frowns,

and called more frequently than ever, congratulating himself that since he had surrendered his heart, it was given into the hands of a rich man's daughter. The mother's hints had only the effect to precipitate the declaration of Warren's affection; for he thought that the footing of the acknowledged lover would be better than that of the intimate acquaintance.

Mrs. Price watched her daughter with unceasing diligence, and for a few days prevented Warren from putting in effect his determination to know his fate from the lips of his chosen one, but he patiently waited his opportunity, and happening in one evening when the mother was busy with callers whom she dared not neglect, followed Clara to the music-room, professedly to settle a dispute about an old song. Though the music-room was connected with the drawing-room, Warren succeeded not only in finding the old song, but in humming some variations on the verb *amo*.

Indignant at the young man's cool pertinacity, Mrs. Price, as soon as the callers had departed, bade Warren good-evening, and insisted on her daughter's going immediately to her room, on the plea that she had been at a party the night before. Warren, rejoicing that the cautious mother had made the way clear for the suitor, proceeded to ask Mr. Price for the hand of the daughter whose heart he flattered himself he had won, and half an hour afterwards walked down Stylish Street assuring himself he was the luckiest dog alive.

When Clara opened the breakfast-room door the next morning, her father faced her ; "Ah, you sly little minx?" said he, pinching her cheeks, "what right have you to be falling in love and getting engaged, without consulting your father?"

"Clara engaged?" shouted the younger children in chorus.

"Clara engaged?" groaned Mrs. Price, allowing the coffee from the urn to overflow the cup she was filling; "that comes of letting them go into the music-room last night."

"I wouldn't fret about it, mother; it was sure to come sooner or later," said Mr. Price.

"Indeed it was," said the affianced, tossing her head, and looking triumphantly at her mother.

"And I am glad," the father added, "that Clara has made so sensible a choice."

More opposition would have been quite as satisfactory to the young lady; it was so romantic to have an unfeeling papa savagely disposed towards a noble lover, but the romance came in another way. When Warren had secured the acknowledgment of love from the young lady, and the consent of his future father-in-law, then, and not before, he asked the childish girl, how she "could bear to marry a poor man, one who must push his own fortunes, and be contented with a modest beginning. If she could leave her father's sumptuous residence, and live in a cottage with her husband." Warren had not intended that

the word cottage should be taken literally; but it sounded very romantic to Clara, and she protested that she should be delighted with "a dear little cottage with woodbine and honeysuckle climbing over it, and sweet-briar and roses all round, and such dear little rooms there would be, too. The parlour should be furnished in blue satin, and the sitting-room in crimson plush; because, you know, Warren, dear, that plush is the best thing to wear, and we shall have to make everything last so long. It will be so sweet and cozy. I'm sure I'd rather live in a cottage with the man I love, than in a palace with one I don't love." Which highly original sentiment was delivered with a heroic and determined shake of the head.

But when the time came to prepare the ideal cot for occupancy, Mrs. Price unceremoniously razed it to the foundations, by declaring that her "daughter was not going to live in a little snub-nose house out of town. If it was a large cottage, with nice grounds and stable like Mr. Richman's, it might do, but a little one-story pen with a slant roof, and door-yard three feet wide! No!! not as long as she had breath to say no!!! Clara's father would give her a house, of course, since he had seen fit to allow her to marry a man who was too poor to provide a suitable one."

Mr. Price replied that he had intended doing something handsome for his daughter, but had thought of buying and furnishing a small house, and securing to her a sum of money, the income of which she could

use, or save against time of need; but if it was preferred, he would, for the sake of peace, hold the whole amount subject to the order of his wife and daughter, that they might use it as they and Warren thought best. He privately informed the father that his own preference would be for the small house, but had not the courage to withstand the mother, who said, "My children have never wanted for bread and butter, and I don't see why Clara would be likely to, for she was to marry an enterprising man, who was sure to be rich, at least her father said so."

A house in a fashionable neighbourhood, and not far from Mr. Price's, was bought and furnished in the latest style; every dollar of the young lady's marriage portion was spent on her dwelling and trousseau, and her father distinctly told her she must look to her husband alone to support the showy residence. No pains or expense were spared that the wedding night might outshine all former weddings in Mrs. Price's set. The young couple went on their wedding tour, and returned to find their house in order from attic to cellar, and servants ready to profess to do the bidding of master and mistress. Clara played housekeeper, and the domestics managed pantry, cooking-range, and tradesmen's books.

Warren saw his goal in the distance when he was a salesman on a small salary; but after he had married the frivolous daughter of a rich father and of an ostentatious, unreasonable mother, the ground which

he had fully expected to reach faded more and more from his view. He might, perhaps, have succeeded in keeping the demands upon his purse within what he regarded as reasonable limits, had he had his fancies alone to consult; but Mrs. Price "couldn't see any use in having a nice house, if people were too mean to entertain their friends," and feared that "her daughter, who had always had a carriage at her disposal, would injure her health by too much exercise."

The mother's complaints were repeated to the husband, who reminded the young wife that she had chosen small means with the man of her heart to abundance without—a cottage with love to a palace where love would be absent.

"I didn't think it would be so bad as this. I didn't think I should get so tired. It's too bad for you to scold every time I want money. I'm sure I've been real saving; I haven't had a new party-dress for three weeks," answered the silly little woman, and the tears streamed down her cheeks.

Warren was not proof against woman's tears; he wiped away the pearly drops, promised some indulgences that he had before refused, and was rewarded by smiles and return kisses. So year after year passed; little claimants made inroads on the husband's affections and resources. The accumulation of money seemed to him of greater importance than ever.

The word "honesty" was construed more and more liberally in certain business circles—the word "ex-

pediency" becoming its synonym in the nomenclature of many. Men made short cuts to wealth by roads from which, in times gone by, travellers had been warned by guide-boards, bearing the inscription "Dangerous," and at the opening of which many an eager racer had been arrested by the finger indicating that the way led to "Disgrace," "Ostracism," "Punishment." But in later days the once forbidden paths were trodden so cautiously, that the pedestrian stopped just short of the terminus. Or else unscrupulous legal tricksters proved that he had never passed over the road, though its gold-bearing sands still clung to his feet, and his shoulders bent under the spoils gathered by the way.

Accounts of the marvellous journeys, and of the shrewdness with which the route was laid out, were in every daily paper, and passed from mouth to mouth. This was the quickest, easiest way to make money, Warren became convinced. That which so many did and still retained respectability, could not be very reprehensible. That which so many did and still walked the streets with impunity could not be very dangerous. He should never be a rich man at the rate he was going on; he would take one of the short cuts made smooth by much travel.

For the first few years of his partnership, he had relaxed his habits of economy but a little, and would in time have been on a par with Melville with regard to business capital; but after his connection with

the Price family his constantly increasing expenses rendered it impossible for him to keep pace with his partner. Melville from time to time invested a part of his share of the profits in convertible securities, which he placed in a seldom-opened secret draw of the safe. These securities, though private property, were sometimes used for the purpose of raising money, when the exigencies of the firm required a greater supply than usual. That secret draw Warren thought of when he decided on the tempting short cut.

It was his custom to go often to New York and make purchases, always provided with means to pay for the goods in accordance with the inflexible rule that the firm had adopted, never to give or take credit—a rule which was their stronghold as long as the partners remained true to each other, but which helped Warren to just the means he needed for carrying out his own schemes. Immediately on his arrival at the great commercial centre, he placed all the funds he could raise, overdrawing his accounts at the banks, and including the contents of the secret draw which he had secured to his own credit at a foreign banker's. Then went from store to store where he had been accustomed to trade, and bought freely, giving the firm's note in payment; if surprise was expressed when he asked for credit, he accounted for it by saying, "It has always been our Mr. Wadsworth's idea to do a strictly cash business. I have thought that it cramped us, and he has agreed with me at last that we

shall do well to take some short credits and so enlarge our business." As Warren was personally well known, and as the firm of Wadsworth and Brigham stood high in the mercantile world, the partner had no difficulty in buying large quantities of merchandise, which he disposed of at cash auctions, added the proceeds to his banker's account, secured his passage on an ocean steamer, wrote two letters which he very strangely forgot to mail himself, but requested the pilot to put in the office. The fugitive persuaded himself he had not overstepped *legal* boundaries, but supposed "there would be a great breeze at first," and thought "it would be just as well to be out of the way till it had blown over." Whether he remained abroad permanently would depend upon what opening there might be. One of the letters which he bethought himself to hand to the pilot just as the boat was casting off was directed to Mrs. Warren Brigham, and requested her with the children to join her husband as soon as possible in sunny France.

The other letter bore the name of Melville Wadsworth on its envelope; we subjoin a copy:

"NEW YORK, —, 18—.

"DEAR WADSWORTH:—

"You will be surprised to know that when you receive this I shall be well on my way to *La belle France*. The fact was, I couldn't stay in the old store any longer. It was too slow; I should never be

a rich man, so I thought I'd pick up what I could and be off awhile.

"The house and furniture are all secured to Mrs Brigham, it will save you and her some trouble if you know that. For the same reason, to save you trouble, I enclose a list of the outstanding notes of the firm. It is a full, correct list, I give you my word of honour. I have been particular about it, for these New Yorkers are tremendous fellows to look out for No. 1, and I don't want any of them to cheat you.

"Remember me to all inquiring friends, and believe me,

"Yours, very truly,

"WARREN BRIGHAM."

When this trouble had become one of the things thrust out of sight, and only now and then brought up by unbidden memory, Warren Brigham's shadow never again fell upon the Wadsworths.

We will say now that Mr. Price advised his daughter not to follow her husband to a foreign land until he had provided her a home. That Warren was introduced by a fellow-passenger to one of the gaudy gambling houses of Paris where he saw the yellow gold changing hands in obedience to a cast of a die. The gambler's greed, which unconsciously to himself had always been his, seized him with a friend's grasp; all forethought, prudence, remembrance of stories of

victims bereft of reason and life fled from him. He staked and won, staked and lost; staked again and won, and so he played with varied "luck" till he left "the hell" in the grey morning, a poorer man than when he bade adieu to his father's house to become Mr. Brainerd's clerk. The last we heard of him, hollow-cheeked and eager-eyed, he was hanging about the gaming tables of Baden-Baden, his single wish to secure the means by which he might once more try his luck, and so at last make a short cut to wealth.

Melville went to the store on the morning of Brown's twenty-first birthday, expecting to find his partner there, and intending to leave him in charge, and himself take the cars for Dartfield in accordance with a previous understanding with Agnes, that the family should meet at the homestead and celebrate the birthday of its youngest member, but instead of Warren his cool, impudent letter awaited the partner. He read it, and angrily threw it down saying to himself, "What does Warren want to crack such jokes for? he might find a more agreeable subject to joke about." But other letters, containing bills and accounts that the swindler in his haste had not stopped to gather up, forced upon the unwilling man proof that the long list of indebtedness of Wadsworth and Brigham was no jest.

Then the secret draw came to mind. Melville Wadsworth was a man of strong nerves and steady hand,

but the bunch of keys rattled in his clasp as he selected the one he needed, and it was with difficulty that he inserted it in the lock; the small receptacle dropped to the floor under his trembling jerk; two or three slips of paper fell with it,—nothing but loose notes of sales, purchases, or former pledges. Melville clutched the safe for support, and dropped into the chair beside it, for the room swam around him, and the walls seemed to be closing over his head. It could not be! All gone! His inheritance, his own earnings? No, it could not, must not, should not be! Aye, but it was so! All was gone; more than all, and he was an impoverished, indebted, disgraced man! In his hand he still grasped the long list of obligations, with its hideous columns of figures, and there on the desk lay the letter that announced the ruin wrought by—by—his old friend in whom he had confided; his partner who had shared his every scheme for aggrandisement. “Fool! fool! that he had been to trust any man so, to put into any partner’s hands the weapons with which to strike him down.”

There was one thing more to be done; tidings of the guilty man might be learned of his family, and it might not be too late to set the officers of justice on his track. Melville hastily collected the papers that related to his misfortune, thrust them into his pockets, jumped into a carriage, and directed the hackman, by street and number, to drive to Warren’s house; he could not trust himself to utter the now hated name.

Arrived at the house, he thrust the menial aside without a word, and went to the room where he had spent many a pleasant, social hour. There was Mrs. Brigham, her ever-ready tears flowing freely; Mrs. Price asserting that all had happened just as she expected; Mr. Price trying to persuade his daughter that her husband would soon return, and to convince her of the importance of keeping the news of his flight from the ears of the servants and the charitable public. No comfort or justice to be gained there.

Heart-sick Melville rode back to the store to be met by his bookkeeper with the intelligence that Mr. Ketchum, junior, had been in to say that Harold, his brother's only son, was no longer in the land of the living. The bookkeeper added that Harold had been a hard boy, had had plenty of money to spend, had drawn about him a set of youths as wild as himself, and that on coming home half-intoxicated the night before, had fallen on the stairway and received a fatal injury. Melville knew that the message had been sent with the expectation that he would call; but weighed down by his own calamity, how could he go to the house of mourning? He went to his own counting-room to collect his thoughts, but his brain was in a whirl, he could not think. Seizing his hat again he told his head salesman that he was going up to Mr. Ketchum's house, and might not be at the store again that day.

"Mr. Brigham be back to-day, sir?" "No."

The merchant again stepped into the hack waiting at the stand near by; he could not face the acquaintances he would be sure to meet if he walked. The salesman watched him until he had closed the carriage door, then turning to another he said, "I didn't know Wadsworth cared so much for Harold Ketchum. I don't think he ever saw much of him."

"No, but it's a shocking thing for a young man to be taken out of life so suddenly, and by his own fault, when he has so much to live for too."

The badge of bereavement marked the entrance to the dwelling of the man of wealth and business prosperity. The waiting-servant opened the door, and in a whisper directed Melville to the room where he might find the sorrow-stricken master. The visitor crossed the hall with careful tread, opened the door indicated, and stood in the presence of the man whom he had always before seen strong, alert, self-reliant, almost defiant in his conscious ability and success, but who was then bowed in the very dust by the blow that had so suddenly fallen upon him. He turned his head sufficiently to recognise Melville, averted his face, and extended his right hand. Melville took it, and held it between both of his as he tried to utter some words of sympathy.

"Thank you, Wadsworth. I don't know why I should want to see you now, when I seem to be not myself, but some other man, helpless and weak. Do you remember the morning you came into the count-

ing-room to speak to me, soon after you came to our store?"

"Yes, sir, I remember it well."

"I remember it; and, Wadsworth, I am not a poor man, as you well know, but I would give every dollar I am worth—yes, every dollar—if I could bring back to life the boy who lies upstairs dead! dead! dead! and make him just such a boy as you were then!" and the hot tears followed each other rapidly down the cheeks on which avarice and shrewdness had traced deep lines.

The morning after Harold Ketchum's funeral his father appeared at the store as usual, and from that time plunged more deeply than ever into money-making. True, he had no son to enrich, but the piling up of gold had become a second nature to him; he could not live, he thought, without it; besides, when his mind was occupied with that, he was not thinking of the boy who might have become one of the noblest of God's noblest creation, but who, while yet a youth, had sunk into a grave of his own preparing.

All the father's kindly feeling for Melville Wadsworth vanished when his misfortunes were made public. It was only the strong and successful that Mr. Ketchum had ever been inclined to help; he bestowed his contempt on those who were unfortunate, and who allowed themselves to be imposed upon.

When Melville descended the steps of the millionaire's residence he knew not where to go. Should it be to the old home, whose doors always stood open, and where his room when a boy was his room still, though he had not visited it of late as often as formerly. How could he go home? It was a day of rejoicing there. Could he go from the scene of woe he had just left and join in festivities? Cheerful looks and gay words could not be his; the knowledge of his own loss would seal his lips and paralyse his tongue. No, he could not join in the family rejoicing; neither did he wish to cast the pall of his own trouble over the merry household. Oh, for some good magician to transport him to his own room—his boy-room—account for his absence to the expectant family, and leave him to shut himself up there and think, that he might gain calmness, self-possession, steadiness of brain, so that he could look into his affairs and know the very worst.

"Where, sir?" It was the hackman who spoke. He had been standing with his hand on the panel of the closed door, waiting his passenger's orders; but time was precious to him, and he could not be expected to wait any longer, even if "his fare" had just left a house to which death had come in its most shocking form. "Where, sir?"

"Wh-ere? Oh, yes, to be sure. To the — Station. I must wake up and know what I am

about," thought Melville. "People will think I have lost my senses."

To the — Station he was driven; he handed the hackman a bill, took what was returned, and thrust it loose into his pocket, bought a paper, and got into a car, one of a train standing ready on the track. Opening the paper, the first thing he saw was the name of "W. Brigham" as one of the passengers by the steamer that sailed from New York the day before. It would be no secret now; everybody would know it. Some would pity the victim; some look down upon him as an over-credulous, easily-duped man, but to keep out of the way of the sympathetic and the exultant to-day; to-morrow he might be ready to meet both.

He reached home earlier than he was expected. Brown had not yet come over from Bridgeherst, where he was at college. Rufus, law-cases detained him in town. Stanley was in his study, and Agnes was arranging flowers for the table and the parlour. Melville entered the house and silently ascended to his room; he opened the door; its faultless order, its well-worn familiar furniture, its home look were all restful, calming. Whether the brothers were far or near, at home or abroad, each of their rooms was always ready, so that their owners might return to them at any moment. Here Melville was at last alone, and could review the occurrence of the last few hours.

He thought of the abode of luxury which he had but just left, and of the sharp-witted man who in his intense grief had uttered the acknowledgment that his success was a failure, and Melville wondered that so shrewd a man, in his mad chase for money, had neglected that which he himself said was of more value than money, his own flesh and blood. Had not the father been too much occupied heaping up riches to seek the moral and physical well-being of his offspring? Had the man paused to throw around the mortal and immortal life of the boy the safeguards of parental restraint and counsel, would the son be now the prey of the king of terror? Mr. Ketchum, in grasping the lesser good, had let the greater slip from his hand.

From Mr. Ketchum the young man's thoughts came back to himself. What had he been doing? Had not he been engaged in just as blind a chase? Had not he thrown away the best of all treasures, "godliness with contentment," in hope of gathering that which "moth and rust" would "corrupt?" Was he not now eating the fruit of his own doing? Had Warren done anything more than carry out the principle to which he (Melville) had given at least a tacit consent? The principle that he must and would have money, even if his gain were another's loss. He communed with himself in his own chamber, and realising the presence of the All-seeing Disposer of

events, confessed that, guilty as Warren Brigham had been, it was not for Melville Wadsworth to "cast the first stone."

CHAPTER XVII.

REUNION.

THE house was no longer silent; footsteps sounded in the halls and in the rooms below. He heard his own name spoken by easily recognised voices. "Did not Melville come with you?" "Where is Melville?" "Have you seen Melville?" "All here but Melville." He alone was wanting; his absence would mar the general joyousness. Banishing as far as possible from face and manner the traces of bitter disappointment and mental struggle, he joined his brothers and sisters, accounting for his sudden appearance by saying that he was fatigued, and had been glad of rest.

In the evening Mr. Carver took advantage of a pause in the conversation to call to mind a family gathering at the homestead years before.

"Do you remember, Melville," he said, "the talk we had here long ago, when you boys were all looking ahead, and each was saying what he wished to be and do?"

"Yes, I remember."

"I wished you all success then; now I should like"

—— Mr. Carver hesitated.

"And now you want to know if we think we have succeeded," said Rufus.

"Yes, I should like to know if I can do so without being over-curious."

"I have no objection to speaking for myself, but you are the senior, Melville. Come, old fellow, tell us if you like getting richer and richer every day, as well as you expected to."

Melville winced. "I will waive the right of primogeniture this time," he said.

"Well, then," said Rufus, "I don't flinch from declaring myself an unsuccessful man, and from asserting that the responsibility rests with that lady sitting there by Brown."

"With me, Rufus?" Agnes exclaimed.

"With you. I started, as you know, determined to be one of the law-makers of the land, and perhaps its highest executive. I went to the legislature independent of party, voted and acted for the best good of my constituents and the people at large. That did not suit some of the old party leaders, who claimed the credit, or shouldered the blame, which you please, of putting me in office. I refused to acknowledge the proprietorship of the said credit or blame, and appealed to my townsmen; they testified their approval of my course by electing me by a larger majority than before. That was well, so long as I could depend upon my own personal popularity and the prestige of family, but when I aspired to higher positions, I came

in contact with old party lines again—they were held in stronger hands this time.

“The direct alternative was offered me, to obligate myself to go for my party, right or wrong, or to lose the nomination. If I would not give the pledge, another would, and I should be politically laid on the shelf. The temptation was strong. I must sell my conscience for office and power, or I must give up the hope of either. I am ashamed to say the balance wavered, but I remembered my home, where father and mother had taught me to love truth and honour. I remembered that, still by the fireside, ‘keeping,’ as father used to say, ‘the hearthstone warm,’ was our good, clear-headed, conscientious sister Agnes. I knew how she would decide the matter. I could, I fear, have overcome the influence of those gone to their rest, by representing to myself that times had changed, and that men of the day were better judges of questions of the day than men of twenty years ago (Melville winced again), but I could not overcome the living influence. I told the wire-pullers that I would give no pledges, and they proposed a more pliant candidate. I do not say that all men who rise to high offices of state do so at the expense of their honour, I speak for myself alone, and”—looking at Agnes—“I lay the responsibility of my failure on the shoulders where it belongs.”

“The burden will press but lightly, I think,” said Mr. Carver. “I am not sure that Agnes does not

rejoice in the failure. I know that she is very proud of the brother who has more than once helped to right the injured cause, the able lawyer whom scheming rogues dare not approach, but in whom the oppressed and wronged always find an advocate and defender."

"Stanley, speak up, or I shall have to vanish to hide my blushes," exclaimed Rufus.

"For me?"

"No, no. I" ——

"Never mind. I have blushed for myself. I do blush for myself when I think of the time I was one of Lady Nottingham's train. Well, thanks to the old home and its guardian angel, I broke away from it, from the Syren and her captives. One night after her ladyship and followers had plied me with their honeyed flatteries till I was fairly cloyed and nauseated, the memory of home came irresistibly upon me. The next morning I was off for the Continent, and travelled, looking towards home all the time. My travels over, I was glad enough to find again the shelter of my father's roof-tree. You know what I have done since; it is not for me to say whether I have succeeded or failed."

"Yes, we do know," said Emmeline, "that Stanley has well earned the title of Poet Brother."

"And Brown?" said Mr. Carver, "if I remember rightly, Brownie was going to 'joy himself."

"Brownie has 'joyed himself," answered the young man, taking Agnes' hand in his. "If ever a boy had

a happy childhood Brownie had, and Brown Wadsworth hopes to 'joy himself still. After he graduates, he will probably go into business, for he thinks that the merchant of educated and cultivated tastes, who trusts that the Elder Brother has prepared for him a mansion in the Father's House, must be a happy man. He will not, he hopes, try to make money for money's sake, but for money's use."

"He will be," said Emmeline, "a man much like his father. We knew when father was living that he was a benevolent man, but since he went to the better country I have heard of numberless instances of his secret benefactions. Poor ministers have told me of them. Once struggling men and women have assured me that they dated hope and better days from the time that he offered them a helping hand. The night would not be long enough for us to repeat the stories of his bounties, no one large in itself, but each of great value to the recipient, because timely. But Melville is waiting to tell us of his success."

"Of his success!" said Melville. "I would have kept the acknowledgment of my failure, of my utter failure, from you to-night, but it seems I cannot;" and he gave in as few words as possible the account of Warren Brigham's dishonesty and flight, and added that his future employment would depend upon circumstances, but that he had resolved, God being his helper, he would not henceforth count as profit one cent gained by double-dealing or misrepresentation.

When Melville's story was told, and the other members of the family were expressing their sympathy, and each mentally devising plans for material aid, Brown, in a low whisper, asked Agnes to follow him to the library.

"We mustn't stay long, Aggie," said he, "we shall be missed. You know that the income of the property father left me has never been spent; that you have always been my cashier, and no matter how much I protested you would have your own way, and induced Mr. Carver to aid and abet you in robbing yourself. I am my own man now, but the money that has been rolling up in my name is more yours than mine. Shall I ask Melville if he will take me for a partner, you, Aggie, furnishing the capital that belongs to you, but that you have persisted, year after year, in placing to my credit, he furnishing the business experience and knowledge?"

It was with difficulty that Agnes could command her voice, so moved was she by this new manifestation of noble sentiment.

"The money is yours, Brown," she said; "do with it what you will. If you use it as you propose, you will do it with my full approval."

Melville Wadsworth started for the city the next morning a penniless, for aught that he knew, a worse than penniless man, for he considered the capital that Brown proposed to put into the firm as strictly his brother's.

There was one who has not appeared before in our story, but who had hardly been absent from Melville's thoughts since he had learned that he was the victim of Warren Brigham's cupidity—one who must know of this change in his prospects from his own lips, and without loss of time. An hour after he left the Dartfield home he was pacing the floor of Mrs. Dennet's parlour, impatiently awaiting the appearance of Miss Edith Dennet, yet almost dreading to see her. The young lady entered, her face betraying surprise at this call at such an unseasonable hour—apprehension, when she noted the agitation that Melville in vain tried to conceal.

“What is it, Melville?” she asked, hastily approaching him, holding out both her hands, which he took in both of his. “What is it? Are you ill? Your brothers, your sisters?”

Melville strove to be calm, and in as steady a voice as he could command said, “Neither, Edith. You think it strange that I should come at this time, but I felt that I must see you without delay. Edith, it is not many days since I asked you to be my wife. I asked of you the greatest gift a woman can bestow upon a man—herself—when I was prosperous, and my means were increasing daily; when I thought I could supply you with all the luxuries you have been accustomed to—that you deserve. Now I come to say that I am poor. That I am a man who has lost every dollar that he can call his own, and who, but

for the open hand of a provident sister, and the generosity of a noble younger brother, would have no prospect before him but to begin life again in the employ of another."

"It's only money!" exclaimed Edith. "I was afraid it was something a great deal worse." Then a new dread suddenly took possession of her; she tried to draw her hands from her lover's clasp as she asked, "Have you come, Melville, to tell me that you loved me well enough to wish me to be your wife when the sun shone and everything was bright, but not well enough to wish me to stand by your side in stormy weather?"

She would have given worlds, had she had them to give, could she have recalled those words. The colour came and went in the young man's cheek.

"Oh, can you distrust me so?" he asked in a tone of utter misery.

"Forgive me, Melville, dear Melville!" She had never addressed him so before. "Doubts follow doubts. Don't talk to me of giving back a promise until you wish to give back yours."

We drop the curtain here. Curious eyes have no right to look upon this scene, where we assure our readers, however, that there was no talk of cottages, roses or posies, honeysuckles or woodbines.

In a few moments Melville bade his affianced adieu, promising to see her again in the evening, and went to his store to commence a harassing business day,

but cheered by the love of a sensible, warm-hearted woman, and "strong in the strength that God supplies."

We have sketched the lives of the Wadsworth Boys as influenced by Agnes' decision. The Wadsworth Boys exist no longer; in their places are the Wadsworth Brothers; they have spoken, each for himself, on the day the youngest attained his majority.

What say you, kind reader, had Agnes reason to regret her decision?

THE END.

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